

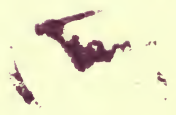
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



3 1761 00879376 2

600

41









Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation



The Mantle.

Vol. 3.

P. 179.

IMMENSE
OF
GERMAN ROMANCE.

SELECTED AND TRANSLATED FROM

VARIOUS AUTHORS.

By
[George Swayne]

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR GEO. B. WHITTAKER,
AVE-MARIA-LANE.

MDCCCXXVI.

426651
1.8.44

5. 5. 10 10. 10. 10.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY THOMAS DAVISON, WHITEFRIARS.

THE BLIND PASSENGER.

“ You know, my friends,” began Count Felsen—Felsen was not his real name, but it is a very good name notwithstanding, and at all events it is better than Count A, or B, or any other mysterious initial, equally ungracious to the eye and ear ;—“ you know, my friends, that at times I take a fancy to odd adventures. A whim of this kind seized me,—it is now about five years ago—upon leaving my bed, in the town of —, to enjoy the freshness of the morning. My walk led me by the post-house, where a new diligence was just about to take its first flight in the world, and I was suddenly smitten with the idea of riding in it—Why not?—My eye quickly ran over the passengers,

already seated, and found them very decent-looking personages. Amongst them were two young women of the middle rank in society; but you must not fancy, as by your laugh you seem to do, that they were the incitements to the journey." "But two beautiful women!" "Sirs, they were as ugly as Satan,—so ugly, that though the best places in the coach were vacant at their side, the two other travellers had seated themselves in a sort of basket that formed the hinder part of this new-fashioned vehicle. Of these, one seemed to be a young Ulpian, the other a disciple of Hippocrates, and both looking as gay as if neither law nor physic were mortal.

The coach was on the point of starting; I hastened, therefore, to take my place, not in my own name, indeed, but as Doctor Klep; the truth is, I began to be a little ashamed of my whim, but not a jot the more disposed on that account to give it up.

Whether I looked too wise, or not wise enough for a doctor, I cannot pretend to say, but it seems that my appearance did not answer

my giving out; the clerk asked for my pass, and, on finding that I had none, shrugged his shoulders most mysteriously, when, as luck would have it, the letter-carrier entered. I gave him a wink, as I called out to him, "You are the very person! You know me well, and can testify for me that I am Doctor Klep?" The postman, moved no doubt by the recollection of past Christmas-boxes, and the hope of those in future, did not hesitate to say, "You may book that gentleman without fear, sir; I know him well."

In a few minutes I was seated between the two uglies—we say, *beauties*, and why not *uglies*?—in a few minutes I was seated between the two uglies, who proved to be excessively polite,—nay, so polite, that for the sake of their character as well as my own, I determined to leave the coach at the next stage. The fates, however, had settled the matter otherwise, and seemed to be inclined for once to indulge my whim for odd adventures.

We had scarcely got quit of the town, when

a young man, with a packet under his arm, called out, "Postboy!"

"If I thought the postmaster would not hear of it," replied the postboy; "It's only within these few days that the orders to take up no blind passengers have been reinforced. There's plenty of room though,—and I suppose your passport is all right?"

The stranger pulled out a paper.

"Never mind," said the postboy; "that will do; it was only for form's sake; one often does not know,—but, get up—quick; quick; we must make haste."

Highly indignant at the driver's carelessness, I determined within myself to denounce him at the post-office immediately upon my return. It was only a short time before that a robbery and murder had been committed by a pretended blind passenger in a diligence, and our careless driver would not even look at the paper, which the stranger gave out for a passport!—Yet his appearance was that of a man who would risk all, having nothing to lose

beyond a wretched existence. His gray coat of frieze, worn to the very last thread, would hardly have hung together upon his back, if he had not stuck in it as if in a sack. To travel with such a fellow in the night was by no means advisable; for it was at least possible, perhaps probable, that a gang of his companions was lurking in the woods for the booty, which he was to spy out for them. As if he himself felt the annoyance of his presence, he kept as far from me as possible, squeezing himself up in the remotest corner, but it was this very thing that now attracted me to him; my suspicions of him, or rather of his situation, began to dissipate, for it seemed that an evil-intentioned person would rather have kept at the side by the coach-door; in the dark corner where he sate there was no connexion with the country, and I now began to reproach myself for fancying evil, where perhaps there was nothing but misfortune, and that too, it might be, unmerited. My attention was more and more excited towards our new fellow-traveller; I observed him closely, and the very first

glance made me ashamed of my previous suspicions; if ever a face expressed the dignity of man, it was his; sorrow and suffering, it is true, had dimmed the brilliance of youth, but had not destroyed it. In a word, my sudden disinclination to the young man as suddenly passed over into the opposite feeling.

At first he seemed to shun my gaze, but in a little time my evident good-will towards him established a sort of connexion between us. The village, at which I had intended to alight, was now long past. My short, and sometimes rude, answers had freed me from the gossip of the two uglies, who at length quite abandoned me, as was shown by the satiric pursing-up of their lips and the turning-up of their noses, and thus the coach became endurable, for the lawyer and the doctor, though more than sufficiently technical, talked upon subjects, which they understood, and which were not altogether without interest.

It was with no slight eagerness that I looked out for the village, where, according to the postboy's declaration, we were to stop a short

time. I wished to take that opportunity of making my blind companion some amends for my first suspicions, which I now felt to be perfectly groundless.

“Have I your leave, gentlemen?” exclaimed the postboy on arriving at the place in question. His politeness, however, was confined to words, for before any one could answer, he jumped off his horse, and left the care of the cattle to the ostler, who was standing before the inn in evident expectation of his coming.

All alighted except the man in the frieze coat. I, therefore, soon resumed my seat, intending to enter into conversation with him, when the postilion looked in at the window, and exclaimed, “You may get out, without any fear, if you choose; it does not signify here in Winzendorf, for no one here asks whether passengers are blind or not, so as they have money.”—

The stranger replied that he should stay in the coach.

“Then,” said the postboy, “I must beg you to remember the driver now, before we go any

farther. It is an old ill-luck of mine that my blind passengers have no money, when they alight at the last stage."

My face, I rather think, expressed my feelings, for the rascal continued, "Nothing is to be had for nothing, except death."

The passenger took out a small leathern purse, which, it was visible, contained little more than the drink-money, made up of a few silver and copper coins, and these he gave to the driver, who touched his hat and retired.

"The insolence of these fellows is at times scarcely tolerable," I exclaimed, turning round with sympathy to the poor blind stranger.

He smiled, and said, "With people of my sort it is always so, and custom reconciles us to any thing."

As he said this, his face, his action, his tone, all inspired a lively interest. The young man was not born for such a condition of life, and certainly was not born *in* it.

"Do you travel far?" I asked.

"That depends upon circumstances!"—Not another word.

I tried again by other questions to carry the conversation a little farther, but his replies invariably brought me back to the point, from which we had started. I was thus more and more confirmed in my opinion that I had before me a man of no common order.

The driver now returned to his horses with a speed beyond all expectation, but though under ordinary circumstances such an event might be almost deemed a peculiar dispensation of providence, yet, situated as I was, it seemed a most unlucky accident. I could not abandon the stranger, without first learning whether any thing could or could not be done to better his condition; yet to offer him such assistance at once, without previous occasion leading to it, was hardly likely to be successful. I saw, therefore, no better remedy for the present than to go on another stage with the diligence, a resolution, which was no sooner adopted than I found occasion to repent it. The face of the stranger, as I took my place by him, expressed the darkest suspicion, and his replies to my questions were briefer and drier than before.

Sometimes even his answers were confined to silent gestures.

As we passed a lone house upon the road a girl came out and called to the driver. In her hand was a mirror, which she delivered over to him with many injunctions for its safety, to which the man replied by as many protestations of his responsibility, and put it at once into the hands of the blind stranger, desiring him to take especial care of it. This last piece of insolence completely revolted me, and I demanded how he dared to ask such a thing.

“Dared!” he re-echoed with some surprise; “why the man’s blind, and those who can’t pay their way in the world must work their way.”

“Let me,—I entreat you,”—said the stranger, and frankly undertook the charge, which nothing but downright impudence could have imposed upon him. The other passengers eyed us both with smiles of contempt, and in particular the two young women, who had besides the pleasure of seeing the doctor and the lawyer at their side, a place which they

had no doubt occupied from ennui of each other's company.

The warmth of my indignation against the driver seemed to have inspired my cold neighbour with better feelings. It was now easy to enter into a conversation with him that was not to be broken off at the second word. By degrees, my sympathy with his fate got out of him that he was born of parents in good circumstances, but who had lost their all by the devastations of war, and were in as bad condition as himself. His immediate object was to seek a patron, from whom he hoped to obtain a decent appointment. On the name and place he was silent.

In the midst of our conversation he chanced to take his hand from the mirror, and an awkward movement of our opposite neighbour happening at the same moment, the glass fell, and was shivered to pieces. Our neighbour denied, and with reason, that the blame of the accident was his, while the driver was no less loud in his execrations; nor was there any peace till I promised to be responsible for the damage. In

the course of this discussion the blind man learned my name, and thanked me heartily for my kindness, which he protested he should never forget, at the same time begging to know the place of my abode, where, he said, he hoped to see me shortly.

Upon my asking him in an under tone, whether I could do any thing to relieve his immediate necessities, he replied aloud, "I have only a trifle to solicit." The openness of the reply annoyed me, and, I suppose, he perceived it, for he instantly added, "I am not ashamed to speak it out frankly, for who in our time does not know that there are many more unfortunate? I, at least, in such a dress, cannot deny my poverty; nor, indeed, is it any disgrace; and at all events it is honourable to any one who endeavours to alleviate it. This honour you have fully merited in showing so much kindness to a perfect stranger, and why should not I publicly avow it?"

This was Hebrew to the driver, who looked round upon us with a smile of wonder, and no doubt thought me more wealthy than wise.

The blind man, however, took me at my word, so far as to beg for a few pieces of silver, which he immediately put into his purse, almost exhausted by the previous demand for drink-money. Henceforth our conversation grew more intimate, and on arriving at the last stage, I said as he alighted, "We will not part here, my friend;" and accordingly I took the same path, a measure which seemed to distress him much, though I could not guess the reason. I thought perhaps it might be some feeling of shame at his poor dress, and in truth the contrast had something strange in it; but however this might be, on our reaching the junction of two roads he suddenly exclaimed, "Here our ways separate; you are probably going to the next stage, whereas my road is through this wood to Rudendorf."

"To Rudendorf?" I exclaimed.

"Yes, indeed; yonder it lies."

"Then, troth, I can go a little farther with you. The owner of the estate is my intimate friend, and my best way of getting home again

will be to borrow one of his horses. Do you know him?"

To my great satisfaction the stranger answered in the affirmative. This was putting the crown to my adventure; I was now like to learn who my companion really was, and I had more than a woman's curiosity on the subject, but in the midst of my self-congratulations the stranger suddenly darted into the brush-wood and disappeared. At this unexpected action my old suspicions naturally awoke again; I began to have a dread of the wood, in which I found myself alone and unarmed; the devastating marches of the French emperor had here and there left behind deserters, who united at times with the ruined peasants in taking up the trade of robbery and murder. A fitter refuge for such gentry could not have been imagined, and perhaps the blind passenger was one of their spies; if so my sympathy with his distress was likely to find no pleasant recompense! Still when I thought of his face and manners,—and they had left a strong impression on me,—

I could not believe that they were those of a robber. On the other hand, how often does villany shroud itself under a fair mask!—To exchange, however, uncertainty for the certain, I hastened to recover the footpath, and took my way to Rudendorf. There I was sure to learn what I ought to think of the man, who had claimed acquaintance with the owner of the estate, my friend, the Baron Wagen.

It so happened that the baron was just dismounting from his horse as I arrived. He had returned only a few weeks before from a tour through France and England, and this was our first meeting since his travels. In the joy of the interview the blind passenger was forgotten.

“Do you know,” said Wagen, “you come as if called for? It is scarcely an hour since your intended passed through Rudendorf.”

“Who?” I exclaimed in astonishment.

“Your intended, as I tell you. She is going with her aunt to the Spa, and I have just come from accompanying them a few miles on the way.”

Upon my expressing my surprise at this sudden resolution on the part of Eloisa, who on the preceding evening had not even thought of such a thing, Wagen replied, " Oh, you know the eternal restlessness of her aunt : this morning she received news of some intended festival at the Spa, and in an hour after they were on their way. I must warn you, too, that Eloisa is not particularly well pleased with you, having sent every where for you to no purpose. Be ready with a fair excuse, for she seemed to me to suspect your being engaged in some love adventure."

" As to my having been engaged in an adventure, she is right ; I have so ; but love had nothing at all to do with it."

I now proceeded to give an accurate description of the blind passenger, when Wagen assured me that he did not recollect ever having seen such a person. According to all appearances, then, my blind man belonged to a gang, which, it was probable, would soon fall into the hands of justice, and I had been seen in familiar conversation with him !—I had even

followed him on leaving the diligence ! The consequences were likely to be unpleasant, more especially as, according to Wagen's assurance, a band of robbers had been lurking about in the country for some weeks. It was this, indeed, which had been the occasion of his accompanying Eloisa and her aunt so far upon their journey, and he could not help agreeing with me that the affair was likely to prove embarrassing. With such a prospect before me, the day at Rudendorf turned out much less agreeable than I had expected ; I grew dull, morose, and taciturn.

"My friend," said Wagen at last, "you annoy me more with your confounded silence, than if you were to burst out into a thousand extravagancies. But trust yourself to me ; I'll cure you of your whims."

"Whither?" I exclaimed, as he started up ; but he hurried out of the room without making any reply, leaving me in no good humour, either with him or myself. In a few minutes he returned.

"There is but one physician in the world

for you, my friend. I have ordered the carriage to be got ready, and will go with you myself to the * * * Spa."

My objections in regard to the want of dress for an absence of many days were quickly removed by the appearance of a travelling trunk, which was brought in by the servants. I then sought to excuse myself on the plea of my having left home without giving any one the least notice of any such intention. To this he replied by saying, "There are pen, ink, and paper, and in two hours the post goes out. Make haste, that we may get to the Spa early in the evening, or your new acquaintance else may give us to know in a most effectual manner the nature of his occupation.—Come, come; no hesitation," he added, opening his writing-desk, and forcing me into a chair before it.

There was some appearance of truth in his reasoning. I acceded, and in another half hour we set off at a round trot, that brought us to the Spa by sunset, just as my intended and her aunt were on the point of going out for an evening walk. I jumped out of the carriage,

and was received by Eloisa with a look of joyful surprise. But so much the darker was her frown, when the first feelings of surprise were over.

“Pray, where have you been hiding yourself?” she exclaimed. “I sent after you at seven o’clock this morning, and you were already out.”

“And high time, too, my love, for those who wish to catch up the beautiful morning, which even then is some hours beforehand with us.”

In the mean time Wagen had taken the aunt’s arm, and I walked behind them with Eloisa, full of vexation at her idle jealousy, and not a little sparing of my words in consequence. For a time she requited my brevity by a similar brevity on her part, till at last her curiosity to know where I had been overcame this monosyllabic resolution; but no sooner had she heard of my journey in the diligence than she half withdrew her arm, exclaiming, “There must have been some reason for so strange—a—a—a whim!”

“How now?” said Wagen, turning back with

the aunt,—“ is the humorist cured of his fancies ?”

“ The Count,” replied Eloisa, “ seems to have sought his cure elsewhere.”

“ Quarrelling again ?” said the aunt—“ Really you two will never agree till you are made one.”

This completed my indignation, though I had still sufficient mastery over myself to subdue the expression of it any farther than by the rising colour in my cheek ; that I could not hinder. But such a remark from her ! Who but herself was the cause of most of the quarrels between me and Eloisa, fanning the slightest spark of discord into a blaze ? Who but herself had delayed our marriage, which, had it taken place, would have inevitably composed our principal differences ? The fact is, she would much rather have had Eloisa for a companion all her life, than have seen her a wife, although a happy one.

“ Come, Baron,” said Eloisa to Wagen, and in an instant was hanging on his arm, while the aunt took mine. I was willing, if possible, to gain over my secret enemy, and began to give

her an account of my adventures, but found little grace in her eyes.

“I quite agree with Eloisa,” she said; “without some particular motive, you would hardly have made use of so improper a conveyance.”

This word *improper* angered me much—indeed more than there was any occasion for. I endeavoured to set her right in her ideas of propriety, and, in so doing, gave her, as she said, so bad an idea of myself, that she began to doubt whether propriety would allow of her having any farther intercourse with me; saying which, she walked off with a formal bow.

In about half an hour after, Wagen came to me at the hotel.

“My friend,” he exclaimed, “you have brought matters to a fine pass! The aunt has employed all her talents of strife-making against you, and I need not tell you they are of the first order. On the present occasion she seems to be more than usually triumphant; could I have suspected all this I never would have recommended your coming to the Spa to wash off your disgrace, for, as matters stand, you are in

much worse repute than before your visit. Even my innocence has fallen into suspicion with them, from my having undertaken your defence too warmly."

The demon of folly seems nowhere to have gained so complete an ascendancy as at these Spas and watering-places. For one real invalid there are at least ten in good health, who come only to eat, drink, or fool themselves into sickness. The fine mornings are slept away, while the moist evenings are chosen as the fittest time for enjoyment. Night-sleep, too, that best of all physicians, is for the most part neglected, and feasts and dancing and every sort of tumultuous pleasure occupy the hours of midnight, as was now to be the case; indeed, to carry the frenzy still higher, the ball was to be a masked ball. Wagen thought that since we were at the Spa, we might as well go through with it by becoming a party to this ball—a proposition which I would fain have scouted, for what pleasure could I expect from it?

"The less you expect," replied Wagen jest-

ingly, "the more easily you will be satisfied with what you really do find. And seriously, do you think our aunt will be absent?—You do not know the good lady; it is precisely on account of this masked ball that she is here, and if she be at the ball, it follows as a matter of course that Eloisa will be there too."

I suffered myself to be persuaded. We sent for dominos, and presented ourselves when the room was already full. Enveloped in our mantles, we observed for a long time in silence the motley stream that rolled about us, and, for my part at least, without much sympathy. On a sudden Wagen jogged my elbow, and called my attention to a harlequin and columbine, who were just then entering. He had previously learned from Eloisa's maid that such was to be the disguise of my intended and her aunt; a disguise that filled me with astonishment, which I could not help expressing to my friend—I allude of course to the aunt's dress; to that of columbine there could be no objection.

"My good youth," said Wagen, who was at the utmost a year and a half older than myself

—“ My dear youth, only wait till you get to my years, and these matters will cease to puzzle you. When a woman can no longer attract by sighs and looks, she endeavours to command attention by the singular and grotesque, and, to be candid, I never saw a harlequin of more grace and activity.”

So too the rest of the company seemed to think, for a thick crowd had collected about Eloisa and her aunt, who were dancing together. All were curious to know who the harlequin was.

The greater my anxiety to learn how Eloisa passed the evening, the more attentive it behoved me to be in preserving my incognito. In our present state of difference it would hardly be wise to let her see I followed her; and, Wagen having left me in pursuit of a fair Circassian, I retreated in an opposite direction, but not so far as to lose sight of my ladies. Unfortunately the crowd of masks grew so thick between us, that I was soon obliged to content myself with transient glimpses of columbine; and, as to Wagen, he did not return,

although I would willingly have had him at my side to assist me in observing my fair enemies, indeed to serve as a sort of vice-spy.

I had now lost them, and after a long fruitless search, I found them again, the harlequin leaning upon the arm of a fantastic pantaloon, and columbine following them with a companion in a black domino and a prodigiously lofty feather in his hat. At this sight my heart began to beat quickly. My feet seemed to be attracted after them as if by a magnet; the stranger appeared to be engaged in very earnest conversation with her, and I could not help following close at their heels, even at the risk of being discovered. When once jealousy begins to speak, reason has no voice, but a lucky accident came to the assistance of poor reason; a sudden rush of the crowd divided me from the objects of my pursuit, and the general attention seemed to be concentrated towards a single point; this was a long funeral procession. It seemed as if the music had received a sign from one of the ima-

ginary mourners, for no sooner was the coffin set down than the funeral measure ceased, and the band struck up a lively allegro. On the removal of the lid all pressed forward to the coffin, and the mourners retired as if to give way to the general curiosity. I was amongst the curious. Although no one dared to pronounce the name of the mask within the coffin, yet every one recognised in it the imitation of that fearful man, who was then the dread of Europe. The police pressed forward to possess themselves above all things of the mask in the coffin, but the laugh was loud and general, when the officers, deceived by the excellent imitation, darted upon the supposed man, and found that all their fury had been wasted upon a figure of straw. Their next impulse was to seize the coffin-bearers, and here too they were disappointed; no one was to be found except a few well-known common porters, who knew nothing of those that had fled. This affair vexed me considerably; the originators of it might, indeed, have satisfied their own petu-

lance, but this sudden explosion of the popular feeling was likely to aggravate the evils under which the country was groaning. I entreated several of the masks, who were still unable to repress their feelings, to moderate themselves for fear of consequences.

At this moment the domino, whom I had seen a short time before with Eloisa, made his way through the crowd to me. He pressed a small, but heavy packet into my hand, and immediately disappeared. Eloisa then had recognised me, and this man was her envoy? On opening the packet I found precisely the same sum, and apparently the same coin, that I had given to the blind passenger, and in the lid of the box was written that an account would hereafter be demanded of me of the price paid for the broken looking-glass.

I had now a double interest in seeking out Eloisa, for who was this man that stood in such intimate relation with the more than doubtful passenger? I sought, however, a long time in vain for my columbine; the mask too

with the white feather had disappeared. On a sudden I heard Eloisa's voice from a small side room.

"Good heavens! sir,—what would you have of me?"

"You must unmask yourself," replied a deep voice.

I went nearer to them. The dialogue was carried on in French, and the unmasked person, conversing with her, appeared to be a native of France.

"Why is this?" exclaimed the aunt indignantly. "A fine masked ball, indeed, where masks are compelled to avow themselves, who have committed no offence against decorum!"

"Extraordinary circumstances require extraordinary measures," replied the director of police; and, turning to Eloisa, he again asked, "With whom were you conversing?"

"A mask," she replied, "as you may have seen yourself."

"Tell me his name, and I shall not then require you to unmask."

“He accosted me,” replied Eloisa, “as is the custom at such balls, and, as he appeared to be a respectable man, I allowed him to accompany me. On this very account I thought it only polite to wait till he himself chose to reveal his name, and I should imagine, in so doing, have acted with more propriety than you do, when you demand of me to put off an allowed incognito.

Another man, and, as it seemed, also of the police, drew the first aside and whispered something in his ear, while I took the opportunity of approaching Eloisa. This singular event removed at once all coldness. She said that she had recognised me on my entrance into the saloon, but assured me that the domino with the tall white feather was perfectly unknown to her. At the same time she proposed that I should mediate for herself and her aunt with the police officer, as neither of them would like to be known in their present dress. On turning round to comply with her request I observed the eyes of the Frenchman fixed steadfastly upon me, and it was plain enough that what

the other whispered to him had reference to myself. I did not, however, the more hesitate to answer for the ladies.

“Sir,” replied the officer to this pledge, “in the first place I must request you to answer for yourself. The robber, who is now in question, thrust something into your hand before he disappeared. What was it?”

The word *robber*, emphatically pronounced, filled me with terror. It was probably the same then with whom I left the diligence, and I was right in my suspicions of his occupation. Eloisa, too, owing to this cursed whim of her aunt's, had fallen into a doubtful connexion. My presence of mind was completely gone; so much the more keenly the Frenchman eyed me. In silence I gave him the box, and my increasing confusion, as I related to him the adventure with the blind man, augmented his suspicion. Nothing but some extraordinary good fortune could prevent him sending us to prison, seeing that we were perfect strangers. This extraordinary good fortune really did occur: Wagen came up to us, and, learning what

had happened, passed his word for all of us to the inspector, who had, some time before, been quartered for many months on his estate. This sufficed to set us free for the present, though that freedom was uncertain, for the officer took our names and address; we were, besides, obliged to give him our word of honour, that, on quitting the Spa, we would return to our former place of abode, and not leave it before a full month had expired.

It was to be expected that the aunt would now be heartily tired of the Spa, and Eloisa and myself had never agreed with her so cordially in any thing before. Wagen, indeed, seemed to be fettered by some secret attraction to the ball-room, but he burst his chains like a hero. We hurried back to our lodgings, changed our clothes, and before the dawn were on our return home. By the middle of the day we were in Rudendorf.

The robber-history, if it did no other good, at least effected something in making the aunt more tolerable than usual; indeed she was deeper in the business than I had at first ima-

gined. It was she who had first been accosted by the domino with the white feather, and that too at the time when, having just discovered me, she was naming my name and pointing me out to Eloisa. This name had led the domino to address her with inquiries respecting myself, to which she replied by referring him to his niece. He had not, however, spoken a word to her of our journey together in the diligence. This to me seemed natural enough, but I have no doubt that the aunt, in referring him to Eloisa, meant to make a diversion to my injury by means of this apparently distinguished suitor; as I said before, she never was a well-wisher of mine.

This common misfortune drew me and Eloisa together more closely than ever. At table, too, the aunt, who was now softened almost to tears, was pressed so warmly by us all, that she consented to let the marriage take place in a fortnight, and Wagen was invited by herself for the Sunday fixed upon for the nuptials. But neither this happy prospect, nor even the marriage itself, was able to make us quite calm.

We were still under the surveillance of a foreign police, to whom our honour was pledged, and we might at any time be dragged off to be confronted with the robbers. Even after the expiration of the month we had that to fear, unless we quitted our present abode, and lived somewhere else for the future under assumed names. But this change was difficult of itself, not to speak of what might happen in the event of the strange history, in which we were concerned, being again brought forward, and our incognito discovered; our attempted concealment would certainly bring us into suspicion. Still less was Wagen's consolation, that the police officer, from particular good-will to himself, would scarcely expose us to such a humiliation. The poor man might be compelled, quite contrary to his inclination, to submit us to a trial from our apparent connexion with this robber-history.

A year passed over, during which this subject had often come upon the carpet, as indeed was natural enough.

“ I have spoken with a strange mask at a

ball for the first and last time," said Eloisa to me one afternoon.

"And, for the future, I will shun blind passengers like the pest," I replied.

At this moment Wagen entered, or rather rushed in, breathless, and pale as death. Eloisa and I exchanged looks of terror; the same idea had taken possession of both.

"My dear friends," began Wagen, "I must prepare you for an awkward business. The band of robbers in my part of the country have been taken up, and already, on the delations of the infamous captain, many an honest man has been submitted to his trial. Such an event must be in any way extremely painful to honourable minds, though we have at least this comfort; the judges, before whom the business is to come, are just, keen-sighted men, who must soon see the impossibility of our participation in any thing so dishonourable."

We were not a little confounded at this news; every day, however, lessened our anxiety, and at length months had passed over without any

summons, till on a sudden all recollection of the affair was lost in the general joy, which arose on the breaking of the fetters that foreigners had imposed upon our country. But the catastrophe was at hand, and that when we least expected it.

It was a fine summer evening, and I was sitting in my study, when Eloisa came in, anxiously announcing the appearance at our gate of a splendid equipage.

"The gentleman and lady have got out already," she said.

"We shall learn from the servant who they are," I replied, following her into the next room.

I was deceived, however, for, on the servant's requesting the visitor's name, we distinctly heard the answer, "An old acquaintance!"—and on his entrance I really thought that I had seen him before, though the recollection was imperfect.

"How!" said he, with great kindness in tone and manner, "do you so soon forget an old acquaintance?"

The order of the Golden Fleece, which he wore, amidst other decorations, caused me to wait in respectful silence for his farther explanation.

“Do you no longer recollect that I am your debtor for a broken looking-glass, and still more for your kindness to the blind man in the diligence? Your benevolence will never pass from my memory.”

It was indeed the blind passenger.

“What a transformation!” I exclaimed.

“Troublesome times,” he replied, “like these, must teach every prince that misfortune may strip him of the dress which he only owes to accident. When we met I had just escaped from the persecution of him who was then all-powerful, and but with extreme difficulty escaped. By a lucky chance I contrived to change all my ready money into jewels, which I carried about with me, unknown to any; for it was only the show of extreme poverty that could protect me from suspicion. Hence it was, that, after my escape by flight, I availed myself of your offer in the diligence, though I did not need it, making

our fellow-passengers the witnesses of my gratitude. All this helped to keep up the appearance of distress, and it was by such appearance alone I could hope to save myself. At that time I did not dare to reveal my real circumstances even to you, and therefore it was that I escaped from you amongst the bushes in the neighbourhood of Rudendorf. Subsequently my heart almost betrayed me. This lady I knew was at the Spa, and there I hoped to meet her at the masked ball. A tall white feather was to be the mark of recognition. For a long time I walked about in the vain hope of being accosted by her, or by somebody in her employ, when on a sudden I heard your name, pronounced aloud; and this led me to seek the acquaintance of two ladies, one of whom, as I understand, is now your wife. I asked them after you, and the ladies pointed out a mask, to whom I subsequently paid a very small portion of the great debt I have contracted.

Unfortunately I failed altogether in my main purpose at the ball; for the enemy had seized

the messenger who bore the letter to my intended. But immediately after leaving you I was warned, and just in good time, of my peril. I retired, and under various disguises arrived safely in Russia, since when I have fought in the war against the oppressor of Europe, and on its conclusion married my intended, the Princess of * * *. I myself am the Prince of * * *, and, as such, have to request a continuance of the friendship which you showed to the blind passenger in the diligence."

The whole mystery was thus solved at once. The prince laughed on hearing that his sudden disappearance in the wood had drawn upon him the suspicion of being a common robber, a suspicion which seemed to be afterwards confirmed by the name robber from the police officer. This name arose from their choosing to consider the prince as implicated in the conspiracy of General Mallet, for he had been a short time before in Paris; or, if they did not really so consider him, they were willing that others should, as some excuse for the severity of his treatment. It is well known that all

were then called robbers who did not believe in the proposition of might constituting right.

I need add nothing more than that this trifling adventure led to a real friendship, and that in another point I deemed myself much indebted to it. Who knows how long the malicious aunt might have put off my marriage with Eloisa, for she was dependent upon her, if the unpleasant adventure at the Spa had not led to the subsequent friendly dinner at Rudendorf?

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for the transparency and accountability of the organization. This section also outlines the various methods used to collect and analyze data, ensuring that the information is reliable and up-to-date.

2. The second part of the document focuses on the financial aspects of the organization. It provides a detailed overview of the budget, including the projected income and expenses for the upcoming year. This section also discusses the various financial risks and how they are being managed to ensure the organization's financial stability.

3. The third part of the document addresses the operational aspects of the organization. It describes the various processes and procedures that are in place to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of services. This section also discusses the various challenges that the organization is facing and the strategies being implemented to address them.

4. The fourth part of the document discusses the human resources aspect of the organization. It provides an overview of the current staff levels and the various roles and responsibilities of the different departments. This section also discusses the various training and development programs that are in place to ensure that the staff is equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to perform their duties effectively.

5. The fifth part of the document discusses the legal and regulatory aspects of the organization. It provides an overview of the various laws and regulations that the organization is subject to and the steps being taken to ensure compliance. This section also discusses the various legal risks and how they are being managed to ensure the organization's legal integrity.

6. The sixth part of the document discusses the environmental and social aspects of the organization. It provides an overview of the organization's environmental and social policies and the steps being taken to ensure that the organization is operating in a sustainable and socially responsible manner. This section also discusses the various environmental and social risks and how they are being managed to ensure the organization's long-term viability.

7. The seventh part of the document discusses the overall performance of the organization. It provides an overview of the various key performance indicators (KPIs) that are being used to measure the organization's performance and the steps being taken to improve performance where necessary. This section also discusses the various challenges that the organization is facing and the strategies being implemented to address them.

8. The eighth part of the document discusses the future of the organization. It provides an overview of the various strategic initiatives that are being implemented to ensure the organization's long-term success. This section also discusses the various risks and opportunities that the organization is facing and the steps being taken to manage them effectively.

THE ADVENTURERS.

It is not many years since Alberto, a singer by profession, although his voice went little beyond mediocrity, resolved to leave his native city, Turin, and travel to Milan. He did not doubt to be much better received there than at home, where, indeed, he had never been particularly admired. Relying upon the maxim that a prophet is nothing in his own country, he got every thing ready, and now he only wanted a companion, who might take upon himself two-thirds of the travelling expenses, and at the same time be a sort of servant to him. This very person he thought he had found in Xavier, his countryman, neighbour, and companion from childhood upwards. Xavier was a joiner, some-

what slow in understanding, but stout, kind-hearted, brave, and true. The greatest of his follies was his having taken such a prodigious fancy to Alberto, that he could not bear to be away from him, and, therefore, dedicated all his leisure hours to his society. His simplicity had always served as a butt for the would-be witticisms of his friend. That he bore willingly. As a boy, Alberto had often drubbed him. That also he bore patiently, comforting himself in his mind with his being in reality the stouter. When any one reproached him with his passiveness, he would cite as his authority the example of the mastiff, Cæsar, who suffered the little Dido to bite his ears every day without being angry. Then on a Sunday he would wash his hands with almond-paste, put on his best clothes, —they must not be *blue* though, to avoid all likeness to the joiner's costume,—and thus he would visit Alberto, and think himself highly fortunate if that elegant gentleman walked out with him, and allowed himself to be entertained at his expense.

In their last walk, Alberto painted glowingly

all the happiness, which, as he thought, was to come to him from this adventure; the most beautiful women of Italy, enchanted by his song, were to emulate each other in sharing with him their rank and fortune, and in offers of their hand. Our Don Quixote wanted nothing but a faithful Sancho Panza, and him he soon found in Xavier. Alberto demonstrated to him, that as an artist,—a joiner, namely,—he must of necessity travel; as a proof of what wonders might be made out of him, he quoted the example of Benvenuto Cellini, who, from a goldsmith, had raised himself to be a sculptor.

Xavier, who had always been accustomed to yield, did not resist now. He thought to himself, ‘Many mechanics travel, and a good workman will find bread any where.’—That this journey would eat up all his savings, that in losing his workshop he would lose his business and time,—all that never entered into his consideration. So he shut up his house, confided the key to an old friend, took twice as much gold as Alberto said he had taken, and thus they set out, Xavier performing all the duties of a servant.

It was early in the morning when they left the Sardinian capital for Milan; and Alberto had now the surprising sight of the rising sun, a sight he had never enjoyed before. He promised himself much pleasure if things were to go on thus, and turned towards Xavier for sympathy in his delight: but the latter had already taken his measures; he had coiled himself up snugly in the corner, and slept soundly, a plan that he persisted in till they had finished the first stage.

The slowness of the Italian veturinos is proverbial; they were three days upon the road before they reached Milan. Early in the morning of the last day, as they were going through the wood on the other side of Navarra, they met with a terrible adventure. They had, indeed, heard much of robbers in this part of the country; but, fatigued by the journey, Alberto had fallen asleep in spite of his fear; and, as to Xavier, he only knew the world from hearsay. On a sudden both awaked from an attack of clubs, as they thought, that played stoutly on their foreheads. Alberto began to whine most piteously, and without delay had his purse in his

hand to purchase his life, while Xavier, who had resolved to defend himself to the last drop of blood, seized his adversary by the throat, fell upon him with clenched fists, and had infallibly throttled him, if the moonlight had not suddenly shown that they were fighting with each other. The whole accident had arisen from this: in their sleep they had lost their balance, their heads had come together rather rudely, and in this way Alberto received back again with interest the blows he had advanced to Xavier in their boyhood. The latter was mightily troubled when he found that he had been beating his friend; he took his oath upon it that he never again would defend himself as long as he lived, though a thousand highwaymen should attack him, sagaciously observing, "If I were again beating a scoundrel, who would answer that it was not yourself, my dear brother?"

They were soon settled in an hotel, and what Alberto had now most at heart was permission to appear on the stage of the grand opera-house della Scala. This theatre is a very extensive

building, in which many ancient families are sharers, possessing their boxes hereditarily. On the doors of the boxes their arms are largely painted in motley colours, and offer a striking image of the victory of the Goths over the elder times of art. Great care too seems to be taken that this feeling shall not be disturbed in the interior; for upon entering you find that each box is neither more nor less than a lady's chamber of audience, where the Milanese receive visits, play at cards, and now and then, though very seldom, look out to admire a beautiful scene, or to listen to some particular air of the opera, which is played every evening for three weeks together. On this stage Alberto hoped to make his fortune, although he was advised rather to try in the comic opera, at the Santa Radagonda; but his motto was, "Aut Cæsar, aut nihil;" and although many sensible people assured him, that, next to sacred music, nothing succeeded better with the Italians than the opera buffa, and that their serious opera was for the most part only dry, tedious stuff, yet all this availed nothing. Alberto, like all mediocre

virtuosi, carried the vanity of a citizen into the world of fancy, and preferred playing a stupid Holofernes in Judith to any part of low, but real, humour.

By perpetually running about from one great family to another, flattering their vanity, and enduring their caprices, he at length brought it so far, that he got permission to make a trial,—and it was high time; for neither he nor Xavier had a single farthing left, and the host had for some days past been threatening to turn them out of doors. The evening came after a day of toil to poor Xavier, who had been running about ever since the morning to provide the necessaries for his friend—not to speak of the preceding night, when he had gone to bed with tearful eyes, beseeching the holy Virgin to let all go well with Alberto, and to send him abundance of applause. In his simplicity he never once recollected, that, according to Catholic ideas, the holy Virgin was not in the habit of meddling with theatrical matters; he only knew that Mary was good and powerful, and that was enough for him.

Alberto was now equipped with a mighty helmet of gold paper, a prodigious beard, a formidable sword at his side, and innumerable spangles on his cuirass, like stars in a winter's sky. Xavier had scarcely boldness enough to embrace his Hebrew Excellence and wish him luck as he set out for the theatre, whither he himself followed at the proper time, but with a beating heart.

The house is extensive, with many entrances, and he found that he had forgotten the way to the pit; he, therefore, asked a passer-by for the place where THEY PLAYED; and the stranger pointed to a flight of steps, which he ascended, without feeling any surprise or doubt at the height he was going, till on a sudden he stood in the vestibule of a great hall, with two doors, by which were four guards, who cried out, as he entered, "Your hat off!"—This in some measure confounded him; but his surprise was still greater on finding the room filled with large tables, each covered with green cloth. Upon these lay heaps of gold, and around them sate pale, haggard beings, as motionless as so

many statues, each with a rod in his hand, at the end of which was a little shovel, something like the maces used in billiards. Xavier was beyond all measure surprised at this, and would have really thought it a billiard-room, if the cards, lying by the side of the louis d'ors, had not convinced him that some other game was intended.

The candles in the chandeliers were now lit, and by degrees the gamesters assembled. Xavier too took his place, and was soon lost in admiration at all the gold, which the bankers either drew to themselves with the maces, or very dexterously shovelled across the green table to the winners. Of the game he understood nothing; he only saw that the table was striped and marked with spots of red and black morocco. Probably he would at last have gone away without taking any part in it, had not a little, pale, busy personage, who was continually pricking a card with a needle, as if to keep a reckoning, pushed him in the side, and said, that, if he did not choose to play himself, he should not stand in the way of those that did.

From this he first began to see that he might play if he thought proper, and he put his hand into his pocket, where, to his surprise, he found a solitary louis d'or, and this he kept feeling till his fingers seemed to burn. The calm unmoved face, with which the player constantly repeated the words, " Messieurs, je fais," and the equal indifference with which he paid when he lost, or shovelled up the money when he won, made Xavier hope that he would not be cheated, though he did not understand the game. After many abortive efforts to drag the louis d'or from his pocket, and fling it upon the table, he at length succeeded. His intention was to throw it upon the red, because that colour seemed the most attractive, but from awkwardness he made the gold piece roll upon the black. The banker asked if he wished it to lie there? and, although it went sadly against the grain, he bashfully nodded assent, that he might not stop the game. He observed that an old officer, who won considerably, still suffered his gold to lie; he did the same, and soon he had four pieces, and trembled so with joy, that he blushed

up to the eyes in fear, lest it should be observed. Now he began to reckon how many piastres make four louis d'ors. He reckoned slowly, not being able to follow more than one thing at once in his head; and while he was coming to a conclusion, the game had been played four times over, during which he had as often won, and there now lay before him sixty-four pieces. The old officer still let his money lie; Xavier did the same, and now he had a hundred and twenty-eight louis d'ors, when the officer took up one half of his money, and placed the remaining half upon the red. Xavier still imitated him; and now he had won a hundred and ninety-two louis d'ors. But it would be tedious to follow him step by step in the temple of Fortune; it is sufficient to say, that he played after the example of the officer for a whole hour, and successfully, for at the end of that time he had five thousand carolini in his pocket.

He now left off because the officer did, when this rough, old soldier turned to him and said, "I have two pieces of advice for you, my good fellow. It seems that you have been lucky in

your sleep, but perhaps deserve it just as much as those who have been awake. In the first place, take one of the guards with you as a protection, or you will be plundered on your way home. In the next place, I would advise you never again to venture upon hazard; it would be ingratitude to fortune to call on her for many such favours as she has now conferred upon you of her own free will—and—who knows?—she might perhaps take a bitter revenge for it.”

Xavier thanked the officer for his good advice, and did as he directed. Immediately upon his return home, he hired a servant, and took up his abode in the best inn of the city; not to be extravagant, but he wished to have some pleasure for his money. At his old lodgings he paid all off, and prayed the people of the house, when Alberto came home, to send him to the *Albergo della Città*, where he was now living.

While things were going on thus successfully with Xavier in the *upper playhouse*, Alberto was experiencing the very reverse in the *lower*. With a courage, little inferior to that of the

real Holofernes, he entered upon his part; but notwithstanding his fearful helmet, his bushy beard, and his formidable sword, he did not succeed in inspiring the public with the fitting reverence for his person. They had not even patience enough to wait for his death from the hand of Judith. She was not to kill him till the third act, and he was formally hissed in the second. In vain he leant upon his sword with the looks of a Regulus, despising death; his helmet was hit by an orange from a critic in the gallery, and so truly that it fell from his head, for, to increase his personal attractions, it had not been fastened with straps under the chin. With the fall of his helmet fell his courage also; the curtain was necessarily dropped, and Alberto, who had as much sense of honour as he had little whereon to ground it, rushed out of the theatre in the greatest despair. For the first few moments he resolved that he would not outlive such a disgrace, and, wrapped up in a black mantle, under which he still wore his romantic dress, he resolved to drown himself; but as no water was at hand, his first heat was

somewhat cooled before it came to that, and he now found it more convenient to use Xavier's travelling pistols.

It was in this mood he reached the inn, which he scarcely dared to enter; he knew that the patience of his host must be exhausted after this unlucky trial, and that the probabilities were he would kick him out of doors. His spirit was now at its lowest ebb; he feared he should die of hunger, the only hope of preventing which seemed to be in Xavier's supporting both by the labour of his hands.

Upon entering his room he found it desolate and abandoned—"Ah," thought he, "the host has already seized upon our little property. Where are you, my brother Xavier?—my friend in life and death?"—His meditations, however, were stopped by the appearance of the host, who told him Xavier had taken off every thing, paid for all, and gone to the *Albergo della Città*.

Alberto would not believe his own ears, and, even after the host had repeatedly assured him of it, he left the house in great doubt, or rather

with the certainty that it was all mockery, and that Xavier, turned out of the house, was running distracted about the streets in search of him. Still he went, for he had no alternative.

With tottering steps and trembling voice he approached the dashing servant, who stood at the door of the splendid hotel, in a fine white apron, tucked up on one side, and silk stockings. No sooner had the man heard his name than he said, "Quite right, sir; be pleased to follow me."—With these words he caught up a silver candlestick, and lighted Alberto up stairs into a magnificent chamber, where he found Xavier, lying at full length on a sofa in his boots. No sooner did the latter see his friend than he ran up to him with open arms. He had heard of Alberto's ill success, and hoped to console him by the relation of his own good fortune:—"Forget all cabals," he cried, "and let the theatre go to the devil; you are now no longer in need of it."—But, instead of this success comforting Alberto, it only vexed him still more.

"Do you believe," he said, with a scornful

look, "do you believe that I worshipped the Muses only for the sake of eating and drinking?" "Well, then," replied Xavier, "you may worship them for amusement as much as you please. Take heart, brother: here comes the supper; the wine is already on the side-board, and the musicians only wait for the signal to begin the music while we enjoy ourselves."

"Quite right!" exclaimed Alberto bitterly; "they, who can neither write nor read, should have all those things! It is quite in rule that I should receive alms from you."

With this he began a song in derision of stupidity, which always attains to posts of honour. Xavier, however, quietly submitted to his friend's noble anger, seated himself at the table with infinite resignation, and revenged himself only upon the meats. When Alberto found how little effect his anger produced, he also seated himself opposite to Xavier, and, notwithstanding his vexation, condescended to enjoy the supper. In the Lethe of wine he drowned his cares, but the musicians were obliged to desist, for he could not tolerate music,

since the hissing in the pit had mingled with the tones of the orchestra, and put him out in his singing.

Hitherto Alberto had only despised Xavier; now he began to hate him, and only thought how he could best help him to dissipate his property. But, simple as Xavier was in other things, he yet understood very well that it would be mere madness to attack the capital when he might live comfortably upon the interest. He continued his acquaintance with the old officer, who assisted him in putting it out on good security. The interest he kindly divided with his friend,—so called,—and in all else conducted himself towards him as before. When the latter, therefore, proposed leaving Milan, he made no objection, for he could easily imagine that Alberto did not wish to serve any longer as a mockery to the loungers of that city.

Alberto, a universal genius in his own conceit, now resolved to apply to painting; and hastened to the gem of Italy, the Queen of the Arno, to satiate his eyes with the beautiful

pictures in the churches and the Florentine gallery. They accordingly travelled thither through Bologna, but, before they got to the end of their journey, Alberto had many mortal perils to undergo in the Apennines, partly from his fear of robbers, and partly because Xavier, who had now more to lose than formerly, would take loaded pistols with him into the carriage. At every jolt of the vehicle he was in alarm lest the pistols should go off to the great endangerment of his sitting part, if that indeed should prove the worst. But to his infinite joy the danger was at length surmounted, and early on one March morning they suddenly saw the cupola of the cathedral peeping out from the valley below. The clear sky, the warm sun, the blue mountains, the shady hills, the winter seed, breaking beautifully from the fields, the dark cypresses, the red buds upon the fruit trees, which stood there without leaves, the green foliage of the preceding year, which had not yet faded,—all this gave to the scene as much life, though spring was not there, as with us when spring has long been blooming.

On a sudden they lost sight of the cupola, and it did not appear again till they were within half a mile of the city, which showed itself in a broad valley, cut into unequal parts by the silver Arno. About the city, in a beautiful circle, lay the splendid villas and country-seats, of which Ariosto says, that, if they were collected in one place, they would make a double Rome. This glorious prospect, however, did not particularly delight Alberto, for his fiery soul did not permit him to be a spectator of any thing beautiful; he must produce it himself, if it was to delight him. Xavier, in his simplicity, had no doubt been gratified by it, if he could have seen it, but he was unfortunately short-sighted. Thus it happened to them, as it does to many travellers,—the beauties of nature passed before them without leaving any impression.

Alberto was by no means so inconsolable as his companion had expected, when, upon entering Florence in Passion-week, they found the gallery closed, and the church pictures covered with black cloth. If he went to the market-place to see Cosmo de Medicis, or the

Neptune of John of Bologna, or the Perseus of Benvenuto Cellini, or the David of Michael Angelo, it was not so much to admire the beauty and the character of these statues, as to attack poor Xavier for not perceiving them. When, indeed, he stood alone before any one of these statues, he grew heartily tired of it after a minute's gazing; but if his friend was present, and happened by chance to turn his eyes away after any fruit-girl or any other passer-by, while Alberto was staring with delight, then the storm burst forth; then it was, "My God, Xavier, what a dull brute you are!—without any feeling whatever for the sublime!—You are the very echo of our age; that is all that can be said of you. You love the superficial, and have no sense at all for the profound that is revealed in these monuments of eternity. Do you not feel what these *quos ego* features would say? Are you not carried away by immortal aspirations at the sight of the water-streams that gush down incessantly from the swelling bosom of the youthful Naiads," &c. &c.

It might perhaps excite some surprise to hear

this metaphysical language from the mouth of an Italian, if it were not mentioned that about this time Alberto had got acquainted with some young tramontani, with whom it was a fashion to apply a few philosophical phrases to every thing. This jargon it was not difficult for Alberto to imitate, and it did him good service. When he had translated any of his triflings into this language, they always sounded like something, and gave him an imaginary right to exalt himself above other people.

At length the day came, which was to remove the veil from all the beautiful pictures, and rejoice the heart of our painter. He and Xavier went accordingly to the cathedral. It was the Saturday between Good Friday and Easter, and by twelve o'clock a crowd of people had collected; not only the church but the place without was filled with the curious or the religious. And now there came, drawn by four white bulls, in slow procession, a large, square machine, in shape almost like a hearse, but with covered sides and little openings. To this

machine a thin line was attached, which went straight through the church to the high altar, and upon the line, in the choir, a white paper dove was fastened. All was yet silent lamentation—no pictures, no music,—only the monotonous sounds of the mass. In still expectation waited the crowd in the church and in the space about it, with the line above their heads. At length the clock struck twelve.—With the last stroke the sufferings of the Passion week were over. The golden sun broke through the dark clouds; the kneeling priest arose, lifted up his torch, and set light to the dove, which was filled with squibs and crackers. In an instant the bird flew, like a flaming spirit, over the heads of the multitude, and kindled the fireworks within the machine itself, when a thousand burning wheels and mounting flashes attested the resurrection, and that the whole creation should rejoice. At this moment all the curtains flew up from the pictures, the organ swelled, the instruments sounded, the singers chimed in with the song of joy, and the whole

people, throwing themselves on their knees with uplifted hands, cried out with a loud voice, "He hath arisen!"

The Christian Xavier wept like a child. As to Alberto, he did not know what to say,—whether to be pleased or to be angry with it all. He began to reflect upon the subject, and at last found out that it was a very ingenious union of the sensual with the ideal, expressing the indifference of the temporal and the eternal. He was even beginning to ridicule Xavier's sentimental tears, when his eyes fell upon an object, whose beauty worked upon him so powerfully as to utterly break up his conceptions. This was a blooming Italian nymph, about eighteen years of age, who knelt close beside him. Her hair, dark as ebony, was parted like that of the Madonna. Her black garments sate closely about the falling shoulders and the full bosom. The polished hands and arms, which she lifted up, were in this position still whiter; and the tears fell fast down her cheeks from her bright dark eyes. With this fair one Alberto fell in love so suddenly that

he quite forgot all about him. He devoured her with his eyes, he held in his breath that he might catch her sighs.—“Here,” he said to himself, “here she is, my goddess, my ideal, my fixed idea. From this hour nothing but death shall separate me from her.”

While he was yet lost in these meditations he received such a violent shock from the multitude, which was endeavouring to get out, that he was compelled to follow the stream. It was impossible for him to withstand it however he might turn back his head, and strive, like Hero for Leander, against the waves; it all availed him nothing; he was lifted up by the various elbows, and, like a Frankish king, borne out of church upon the people’s shoulders. At last he grew impatient, and made a convulsive effort, by which he lost his favourable position, and would infallibly have been squeezed to death, if the faithful Xavier had not closely followed, and helped him by keeping off the crowd from him with his brawny arms. In this way he got safely into the market-place, but with his shoes trod down, his stockings

covered with mud, his hat he had lost in the crowd, and, on looking for his watch, that too was gone. This loss, however, did not particularly distress him; Xavier had given him the watch, and Xavier might give him another,—but what was become of the lady? He had not been able to find her, although he waited at the door, and had the whole community pass in review before him. At length it occurred to him that his appearance was somewhat disordered, and that he would be disgraced by her meeting him in that plight. Besides he had the certain hope of seeing her again in the church on the following day, till when he resolved to be patient, and occupy himself in his fancy with her image.

The next day he did not fail to go to church. It was long before he discovered her, and only in the moment when he was giving up all hope. This time she was not in black, but in a light brown silk, which treacherously concealed her splendid figure. She was piously repeating her paternoster, and, when this was done, she let down her veil, and went her way. Alberto

followed with trembling steps. At the church-door a carriage waited, which she got into; and, if the veil had enviously deprived him of the sight of her face, this loss was amply requited to him by her stepping into the carriage, when he saw the prettiest pair of ankles he had ever dreamt of, and feet corresponding. In his ecstasy he cried out, "Hold me, Xavier! My head swims!"—But this once he was forced to help himself, for his friend had remained behind to hear the noble music and enjoy the incense, which the choristers swang about in time behind the chanting priests.

Alberto now began to write sonnets in honour of his fair one, and in this new occupation quite forgot his painting, observing, truly enough,—“if I cannot paint *her*, what can I paint? I may, however, express to her the feelings of my heart.”—Accordingly he became a poet.

His next object was to discover where his fair one lived, a point in which he soon succeeded; and now he tinkled on his guitar and sang sonnets every night below her window.

When he saw her in church he would gaze at her till her eyes met his, and then he would die away with delight. Sometimes she would smile at him, and at length he had the good fortune, when he serenaded, to find that a little window immediately over the door was opened, and then he would hear such violent applause as could scarcely be expected from her tender hands. The strangest part of the business was, that since his falling in love he had lost much of his conceit and assurance. He had grown so timid, that he did not venture to ask who she was; she was to him a sort of supernatural being, and it would have disturbed his imagination to learn that she belonged to a certain rank or to a certain family. But, did she love him?—that he wished to know, that he must know. He, indeed, thought he had the most evident tokens of it in her smiles, in her sighs, and in her nightly applause; yet still he wished to hear it from her own lips, and for this an opportunity soon offered itself, though this too cost Xavier many a hard dollar. Alberto had observed that his fair one confessed

herself regularly once a week, and he now presented her confessor with a considerable sum to let him perform his functions for a short time. The matter was not difficult to be managed: the confession took place early in the morning, when few people were present; the brown hood concealed the confessor, who sate in a chair, where he could neither see nor be seen; the penitent was similarly placed at his side; and in the partition between them was a small hole, through which they could converse when they mutually applied ear and mouth to the opening. At first Father Benedict made some scruples, but the fair ducats eventually removed all objections; and, in his jovial mode of thinking, he hoped to obtain forgiveness for a sin, the only aim of which was to gain for a lover the certainty of his being beloved or not.

With what anxiety did Alberto apply his ear to the opening! and how was this feeling increased on hearing her voice! She had but a single sin to confess—what else could that be but her love for him? With pious voice he encouraged her to be candid, and now he heard

her say,—“Ah, reverend father, it is on account of a young man, who daily comes here to see me, because he has fallen in love with me.”

“Fear not, my daughter,” cried Alberto eagerly; “love is a holy passion. Is not our religion grounded on love? Is it not said in the Scriptures, that we should love each other? Therefore, speak, my daughter; unbosom yourself. Does the young man really love you?”

“As to his love, I cannot say much about it,” replied the penitent. “A common love it can scarcely be, for the man is an uncommon fool.”

At this Alberto felt as if a pail of cold water had been flung over him.

“How then! you do not love him in return? And yet, godless creature, you encouraged him with smiles and tears!”

“Alas! that is the sin I would confess. I have made a fool of the poor man,—and that too in church,—a sin which I candidly own and repent of.”

“And have you not done it out of church too, thou wanton Magdalene?”

"Yes, truly; but the sin is not so very great!"

"I know the young man well; he has told me all. Did you not with pleasure lend an ear to his nightly serenades? Did you not encourage him by clapping your hands?"

"Ah, that was my foolish arrogance, which I freely confess. I took a delight in disturbing his nightly rest, while I slept comfortably; it was the footman, whom I paid for it, that saté at the window and clapped his hands."

"And hence the loud applause," said Alberto hastily.

"His hands were hardened by labour, and no doubt the approbation was emphatic."

"And you could jest thus with the noblest feelings?"

"If he had possessed the least particle of understanding he would have known that the daughter of the house does not sleep in the portal-chamber, and that delicate hands do not clap as if they were deal boards."

Alberto had now enough. He sent her away without absolution, telling her she would eternally burn in purgatory for her presumption,

and it was with difficulty he played out his part. But, when time had in some measure cooled his anger, it is probable that love would have resumed its empire, had not the fair one—suddenly disappeared. To dissipate his care he got acquainted with a set of boon companions, who advised him not to take the accidents of life so seriously, but, since fate had allowed him to live comfortably at the expense of Xavier, to do so and to seek elsewhere for consolation. Henceforth all was mirth: every day there was a snug entertainment at Xavier's, to which they were invited; for the honest joiner took a pleasure in their pleasure, and rejoiced in their rejoicing.

At this time a strange event happened, which to the gentle reader may seem incredible; but then we must entreat him to remember, that Xavier, although a mighty honest fellow, was utterly inexperienced in the practices of the world. Each of these young men had a mistress; Alberto too had found one, and these fair ones always supplied them with matter of conversation when the wine had made them

merry, at which times Xavier had to submit to the humiliation of having nothing to tell. Then again, if they went into the country, each took his mistress, and he had none,—so that at last they promised to provide one for him; but he had his own notions on this subject; he would have one that was honest and handsome, and really loved him. This, however, was an affair not so easily compassed, especially as he was bashful and retiring; and thus a long time passed, in which he was constantly forced to submit to be the object of their mockery.

However patiently he might endure this for a time, yet at last it became intolerable, and he began seriously to reflect upon the means of extricating himself from it with honour. When he walked out, he stared up more than usual at the windows, for hitherto he had not even dared to look Alberto's fair incognita fully in the face. Even now he ventured to stare at a woman only when she was thinking of something else and did not observe him; the moment her eyes met his, he would fall into confusion and take to flight as fast as possible. In

addition to this, as we before observed, he was remarkably short-sighted, and could not tell one person from another without coming quite close, and this his extreme bashfulness forbade.

Latterly, when his friends visited him they found him thoughtful and abstracted; he paid no attention to their jokes, his extraordinary laugh had lost much of its heartiness, nay, he was sometimes even heard to sigh. Alberto took all imaginable pains to find out the meaning of this change, and it was not long before Xavier one evening unbosomed himself to his friend—"No one," he said, "knows where the shoe pinches but he who wears it, and I have often wondered, Alberto, how you could fall in love; now I begin to comprehend the possibility of it, for I myself have lately begun to experience something of the sort."

Alberto was all ear. Xavier continued.

"You have imagined that I could never be beloved, but it is very possible that you may have reckoned without your host, for to speak candidly, I have fallen desperately in love."

"With whom, brother?" exclaimed Alberto.

"I know as little of her as you do of your incognita. All that I can tell you is, she is a lady of virtue and honour, although she sits at her window the whole day long, from morning till evening. The only thing I cannot bear in her is the daily change of her head-dress, which no doubt might be attributed to vanity, but in other respects she is so quiet and thoughtful, that I cannot believe it of her. Other women are running backwards and forwards from their windows, like fools, to jeer at the passers-by, while she never looks out, but only straight before her. Probably she is occupied with some sort of work, and this it is which gives me courage to gaze at her. Oh, you have never seen such blue eyes, such cherry lips, such a lovely bosom!"

"Is she then handsomer than my church incognita?" asked Alberto.

"That I cannot precisely say," replied Xavier, "for I never fairly looked at your incognita; but this girl I have seen, and do see, every day; her features are deeply engraven upon my heart, and, if she prove as handsome

in mind as she is in body, I am resolved to marry her as soon as possible, provided she have no objection."

Upon Alberto's questioning Xavier more closely, he drew from him that the fair one lived at a milliner's in the next street, and he comforted him with the assurance that such people were seldom very cruel. But love, which always doubts, overpowered Xavier, so that he could not rest without hearing the confession from her own lips. The next morning, therefore, they both passed by the house. Alberto looked very attentively at all the windows, but could discover nothing but a handsome milliner's block, painted white and red, and wearing a new head-dress to entice customers. He turned round to Xavier, and was about to complain of their having taken their walk to no purpose, when the latter heaved a deep sigh from the very bottom of his breast, exclaiming, "There, she has again got on a new cap!—Always changing her head-dress!—always sitting at the window! It does, indeed, please me in a certain measure, as it constantly gives

me an opportunity of seeing her; but, after all, it is being somewhat too vain."

Alberto opened his eyes to double their usual size, and stared at Xavier as he asked, "Is it she, brother, who sits yonder in the window?—Is it she, with whom you are so desperately in love?"

"And does she not deserve it?" said Xavier.

"Yes, undoubtedly," replied the knavish Alberto, who had formed his plan on the instant. "I do not believe that a more beautiful bust has ever stood in a shop since the time of the fair Helen. She has hair more yellow than flax, and a Grecian line from the forehead along the nose—no joiner could cut one straighter."

"I do not wish to depreciate your mistress," said Xavier, "though, if I recollect rightly, she has black hair."

"What is black compared to yellow?" replied Alberto—"no more than darkness to light! Our maidens with their hazel eyes may go and hang themselves upon the first hazel tree, if they like; here is the bright heaven!"

"Each may be good in its way," said Xavier.

“I see that you are laughing at me because my mistress is fair and yours is a brunette. But if we cannot agree about eyes and hair, what say you to her taste?—her modest carriage?”

“As to her taste,” answered Alberto, “you may rely upon never again finding such a damsel. Her appearance announces gentleness and virtue, and if she be only as diligent as she is steady, she’ll increase your five thousand carolini with just as many ciphers.”

“Increase or not increase,” replied Xavier, “you see that I can be in love as well as you, and that I know how to find out a beauty. And, now you see how it is with me, I reckon upon your assistance.”

“You shall find a true Achates in me,” said Alberto; and with these words they returned home, Xavier full of loving meditation, and Alberto forming a thousand knavish plans to make his friend ridiculous.

Without delay he communicated Xavier’s love to his companions, and the object of it excited general wonder. A plan was soon con-

certed amongst them at the expense of the poor lover, whose most earnest wish was to get a tête-à-tête with his mistress, that he might protest his passion to her. Alberto undertook to manage this affair. He went to the milliner, and, by promising her something handsome for her civility, easily got possession of the bust, to which he added a perfect body, and dressed it in a fashionable attire. His next measure was to carry a letter to Xavier, and great was the joy of the latter upon finding in it an invitation to come the next evening to the garden behind the house, when she would expect him.

Xavier hastened thither at the appointed time, and found his fair one in a graceful negligée at the balcony above, visible only to the waist, like the figures in a puppet show. In this way it was easy for Alberto, who stood in the interior with his companions, to move the image, and make it answer to all Alberto's questions. Thus the two lovers mutually confessed their passion by the light of the Pleiades; and the fair one owned to Xavier that she was strictly watched by her step-mother, lived very

retiredly, and yet was forced to dress herself out, much against her inclination. She wished for nothing so much as to free herself from this slavery, and, having heard that Xavier was a kind, honourable man, was ready to marry him. This, however, could only be done by his carrying her off. Another time she would tell him more, but now she heard somebody coming, and must hurry away, with a promise to give him the earliest intimation possible.

This intimation, like the preceding letter, was brought to him by Alberto; and it was now arranged, that in a few days the elopement should take place to Fiesole, the old town on the mountains near Florence, where they might be privately married. Alberto took charge of all. The carriage came at the appointed time: the fair one was already in her place; Xavier got in; Alberto pressed him again to his breast, tore himself away amidst a flood of tears, and bade the coachman drive on.

For a time Xavier scarcely dared to speak. At last he opened his lips with a timid question,

but received no answer.—“ Perhaps she sleeps,” thought he to himself—“ Should this decisive step trouble her ! I must not be importunate. Doubtless she is bashful from being alone with me in a carriage so early in the morning twilight. But the daybreak will restore our courage to both of us, and with the evening she is mine.” —This mode of thinking reconciled him to all, and, after having ventured one or two more fruitless questions, he seated himself opposite to his mistress, which position he occupied in silence till the sun rose, and showed him that he had run away with—a puppet.

Reader, have you seen a bear, grasping after the honey, which is tantalizingly offered to him through the grating of his cage ? For a time he suffers himself to be beaten over the paws without losing his patience ; but when, after all, he finds he is only being fooled, his good-humoured growl is changed into howling, his friendly grin into gnashing of the teeth, and he makes a furious attack upon the bars. The disappointed bear is no bad image of poor Xavier, whose first impulse was to seize by the neck the corpus

delicti, the unlucky puppet, and dash it out of the carriage window. Never, since the time when Jupiter hurled Vulcan from Olympus, has any two-legged, featherless animal flown so rapidly through the air. After this achievement he leaped out of the coach to murder the coachman; in which purpose he would infallibly have succeeded, if the latter had not quickly betaken himself to his defence, and made good use of his whip, with which he very philosophically flogged Xavier over the face, all the time expounding to him his innocence.

Xavier was a good-natured creature, and, like all simple beings of great bodily strength, not easily put into a passion, but, when once inflamed, his anger approached to madness. After many efforts to storm the coachman in his intrenchments, and having been each time driven back with loss, he was contented to leave him alone, exclaiming, "Go to hell, scoundrel!" a dismissal that the man did not wait to hear repeated. The whip, which he had before wielded so dexterously against Xavier's eyes,

was now turned against the horses, and in a few minutes the whole equipage had disappeared.

Xavier stood there pale, with his eyes fixed on the ground, and it seemed to him that nothing less than Alberto's life could satisfy him. He drew out the great knife which he constantly wore, felt its edge, and fancied to himself how gloriously the blood would stream down the blade, when he had plunged it deep into Alberto's heart. Without knowing where he was, or what he did, he ran up the mountain, between the old garden-walls, that had been built in the middle ages from the ruins of the old city, which the jealousy of the Florentines had destroyed; nor did he stop till he had reached its summit. Without any certain purpose he went towards the Cathedral, at the very time that Julia was taking the same direction. It seems that she lived in a house close by; one of the numerous gardens too upon the hill was also her property, and, just as she came out of the gate, she was met by Xavier, who, heated by the sun, his wrath, and his hurried

ascent, felt himself tormented by an intolérable thirst. Without fairly looking her in the face, he greeted her with looks in which good humour and vexation were strangely mingled, and asked for some fruit from her garden to quench his thirst; upon this she invited him to come in. The old Catherine was despatched to fill a basket with fruit; and Xavier devoured the melons with an eagerness that surprised Julia, whose curiosity was now excited to learn the cause of his singular appearance. : Little persuasion was requisite to bring Xavier to confession, for he was dying to lessen the burthen of his grievances by imparting them to some one.

“Madonna,” he said, “I verily believe there has not been a man since the age of Methusalem who has suffered such an injury as I have. —Yes, scoundrel! traitor! I’ll be revenged!” And with this he drew his knife, and made it glitter in the sun.

It may be supposed how Julia felt at this sight; but she was of a firm, decided character, and she really grieved for the poor Xavier.

He looked so honest and so true-hearted that she felt convinced he must have been extremely ill-used, and she resolved, since fortune had brought him into her neighbourhood, to do all in her power to ward off any evil to him from his passion. Without, therefore, employing any dry admonitions, which only serve to irritate, because they show a want of sympathy, she agreed with him that revenge was sweet, and that there are injuries only to be washed out with blood: "But," she added, "what have they done to produce this anger?"

"I must begin then," said Xavier, "by owning myself the dullest man in all Etruria, and that my greatest stupidity consists in having loved and esteemed, from childhood, an idiot, a vagabond, a useless, cold-hearted villain. This scoundrel persuaded me to leave my workshop, where I earned my daily bread as an industrious workman, and follow him to Milan to see him hissed off the stage. In the meantime fortune so contrived it, that I gained twenty thousand scudi at the gaming-table without my knowing any thing of the game, and

without my ever having played before or since ; and although I fairly divided the interest with him, nay, even gave him the greater share, yet all this availed nothing. I believe that he even began to hate, and envy, me, for being luckier than himself. For a long time I bore the jeers and mocks of him and his companions, under the idea that it was all a friendly joke, but this last trick I will never forgive him. No, Alberto—mean, treacherous friend, this I will never forgive you till I have stabbed you to the heart.”

At these words the knife again came forth, and Julia needed all her self-possession to keep up her courage.

“ What then has happened ?” she said.

But Xavier’s passion had by this time cooled, and with the subsiding of his passion his bashfulness returned. Hitherto he had not observed with whom he was speaking, and had only considered Julia as a medium through which to unburthen himself of his resentment. Now, however, that he had to relate his love adventure, he began to notice her more closely.

Her beauty blazed upon him at once, and he blushed up to the ears, and was forced to collect himself before he could recover his fluency. This confusion, however, gave him a pleasing expression, while the heat and his anger had added unusual animation to his well-formed features; his large, hazel eyes sparkled with unwonted fire, and his very bashfulness lent him a gentle character, which contrasted wonderfully with his manly form.

“I have, indeed, deserved it,” he said at length, with stifled voice; “for how could I be such a fool? In my excuse, however, I must say that I am extremely bashful in the society of women, and moreover am somewhat shortsighted. Hitherto I had known nothing of love, and Alberto with his comrades easily contrived to make a fool of me, and disgrace me.”

He went on with a candid relation of his whole adventure, and the frank simplicity of his tale completely won over Julia. A maiden readily forgives a man for his inexperience in love matters; and although the whole affair showed a considerable absence of mind on the

part of Xavier, it by no means proved him either stupid or insensible. It was rather a species of artificial vanity to escape the mocks of his companions, which had led him to this singular amour, and at the same time he showed himself in all he said as a man who was deficient neither in sense nor feeling. In addition to this he evinced a kindness of heart, a thousandfold more valuable than the cold wisdom of the little egotistic minds that fancy themselves far exalted above the pure simplicity of an uncorrupted soul.

When Xavier had ended his story, Julia smiled, and said, "You should not take this affair so much to heart, for the wise Alberto need not make you any reproaches; if he enticed your Short-sightedness to run away with a doll, he himself has fallen in love with a living maiden, who in good truth has made him plainly feel how profoundly she despised him."

Xavier stared at this declaration, for in his fervour he had entirely forgotten to mention the episode of Alberto's fair one.

“How do you know that, madonna?” he exclaimed. “From whom did you hear it?”

“Do you then not recognise me?” said the fair Julia, laughing. “Well, it is evident that you have no eyes for ladies, either real or artificial.”

“Is it possible?” cried Xavier,—“you, madonna, are that fair one?”

“I, and none but I.”

“And how then came you here?”

“My little property is here. At that time I was on a visit to my aunt.”

“And where then are your parents?”

“It is many years since they have rested in the grave,” replied Julia with a sigh.

“I too have neither father nor mother,” said Xavier, while the tears stood in his eyes.—

“And do you live here alone?”

“I possess this house and these gardens, with no companion but my old Catherine. Sometimes I go to the city to my aunt, but the greater part of my time I spend here, never so happy as in my solitude.”

For the first time in his life Xavier gazed at

a woman boldly; his twenty thousand scudi gave him courage.

“Hark ye, madonna; are you resolved never to marry?”

“That is a very close question,” replied Julia, laughing.

At this moment he observed a coat of arms painted over the door.

“What arms are these?” he asked mournfully.

“Our family arms,” replied Julia.

“Ah! is it so?—But I see a joiner’s shield below; what does that mean? Does a joiner live here?”

“That was my father’s craft.”

“How! a nobleman turn joiner?”

“His ancestors gained these arms in the feudal times, but circumstances robbed their descendants of their property. My father upheld the honour of his family in securing to it a comfortable independence by the labour of his own hands, and was able to educate his daughter and leave her a little property at his death.”

“ Oh! madonna,” exclaimed Xavier joyfully, “ I too have been a joiner, but now I am rich, and could buy a patent of nobility if it were requisite.”

“ Such is the way of the world,” said Julia ; “ the waves of time alternately rise and fall as the wind blows.”

“ But sometimes the various streams collect into one lovely lake, the banks of which are beset with flowers.”

“ Why, you have grown a poet !”

“ If it be true that a man grows a poet when he is in love, I can easily understand how it has happened.”

Here Julia would have broken off the conversation, but Xavier held her back, and said, “ I have ventured for once, and, if it do not take place now, it never will. You are beautiful,—that your face tells me: you are good,—that your beauty tells me. You yourself have said that you are an orphan; a strange accident has united us, and, if I do not strike while the iron is hot, all’s lost. I came out to be married, and it rests with you whether I

shall return as I set out, and be a laughing-stock for the abominable Alberto; or whether I shall triumph over him, and rout him entirely, not with a dagger, but with your presence."

In this way Xavier continued to press the fair one, till he at last wrung from her a consent. The suddenness of her yielding did not at all strike Xavier; and, that it may not surprise any one else, we must observe, that at the time when Julia had inquired into the circumstances of Alberto, she had also learnt all about Xavier and his simple honest character. The year before she had experienced a great loss in the death of her intended, a brave soldier, who had fallen in battle for his country. Like Schiller's Tekla, she had sung many an evening to her guitar, "I have lived and loved."

But Julia's character was more calm and cheerful than that of Wallenstein's daughter. The beautiful Italian sky, and the quiet of her abode, also contributed to enliven and animate her still more. She had taken courage, and resolved

to live ; but as a lone woman, she needed an upright friend, who would support her through life, who would not require too much, and who would feel himself happy in her possession, without actually enjoying her love ; where could a fitter person be found than the honest, good-tempered, and affluent Xavier ? She, therefore, gave him her hand, and although he never actually gained her love, yet he won her heart, and made her happy.

It may be easily supposed with what triumph Xavier carried back his bride with him to Florence. All his good friends were already collected at the city gate to receive him. Alberto himself opened the door, and cried out,—“ Well, Xavier,—my friend and companion in life and death, how have you prospered ? Have you brought back your beautiful bride ? ”

“ Yes,” replied Xavier coolly, “ there she sits.”

“ What do I see ! ” exclaimed Alberto, confounded.

“ Another ingenious trick of capricious Lady Fortune, Master Alberto,” said Julia, laughing.

“ Sometimes one plays *below* and is hissed, while another plays *above*, and gains twenty thousand scudi. Sometimes an honest soul is supposed to marry a wooden puppet, and the puppet suddenly changes to a living maiden, who has actually refused the gallant Alberto. Xavier is much indebted to you, sir, and though you have lived upon him, and made him your butt, what does that signify? To you alone he owes his property and his bride.”

What answer Alberto made to this, the chronicle does not say. It is probable that he again resolved to drown himself, and again put it off as he had done before. We doubt, however, much that the prudent Julia did not allow Xavier to take him a second time into favour, and restore him to his former privileges.

THE MANTLE.

THE Britons, time out of mind, have fabled so much of their King Arthur, that a portion of these wonderful tales have echoed across the sea, and been repeated by the neighbouring people. Of course the legends, when told by such various tongues, have not always remained the same: here, something has been added; there, something has been omitted; hence the many variations of the old English legends, and hence so many romances, the growth of British soil, to which posterity has given the name of a Gallic or German hero.

The Emperor Charles the Great was particularly fortunate, in that the fabulous histories of King Arthur were so frequently set down to

his account. Like him a hero, like him a friend to love, and like him a member of the society of Saint Gangolph *, the most of those wonderful adventures fitted him very passably ; and, were it not for our conscientious honesty, we might aptly enough, in compliance with the German tradition, set down this legend, which really belongs to the court of the old Briton, as having happened under the eyes of the son of the great Majordomo. But to show you, gentle reader, that you may rely upon our word, we freely confess it is not Charles the Great and his countless wives or mistresses, but Sir Arthur and his lady Guenevra, that are the hero and heroine who are to figure here.

The court at Carlisle had, besides the queen, many a blooming, and many a fading beauty, who still maintained their rank on the score of seniority. Some of these we must name to you, as they have their parts to play in the course of the story. The handsomest amongst them was Iselda, the beloved of the brave Hector ;

* Saint Gangolph, the patron of all deluded husbands.

who for fifteen long years had let her knight sigh for her love, without having as yet granted him any other favour than the liberty sometimes of kissing her veil. After her came Rosalie and Isabella, the wives of Sir Gawain,—whose name cannot be unknown to you,—and of the bold Iwain, the king's son; these ladies were sisters, and while the one had adopted Pride as the guardian of her honour, the other took up Piety as her watchman. Next on the list is Sir Ydier's bride, the Lady Agnes, who, notwithstanding her sleepy blue eyes and her simple dove-looks, yet maintained her rank amongst the British goddesses. The wild Britomarte follows, who used to punish with one, or two, years' banishment every presumptuous glance of her knight, the bashful Girflet. Below in charms, but, according to age and their own estimation, in the very first place, come the lusty wife of Sir Guy, the Seneschal, and Lady Eleanor, the wife of Peter the holy, Count of Brittany, who herself was ambitious of an apotheosis; and in the meantime neglected nothing to maintain that

rank in the British court which she expected one day to hold in the court of Heaven.

Two beauties we have omitted to mention,—the one because she could in no respect be said to belong to the court of Queen Guenevra, being mortally hated by her;—the other, because it was only from her extreme loveliness that she was placed upon a level with the rest, for neither by birth nor property had she any title to rank amongst the high court-ladies.

The first of these two, as yet unnamed, beauties, was the Princess Morgana, the sister of King Arthur. The second was the little Genelas, from Wales, who came to court an orphan, and made the queen an indifferent return for her kindness by completely eclipsing with her simple loveliness all the splendour of the royal beauty. The little maiden, however, should be forgiven; she did not desire any of the admiration which was lavished upon her; but one must have been blind not to have preferred Genelas, unadorned, to the proud British queen in the splendour of her diadem,—especially

when innocence, simplicity, and goodness were taken into question, of all which Queen Guenevra possessed very little.

Although we have coupled Genelas and Morgana together, the reader must not imagine that they were of the same stamp ; as little inequality as there was in their beauty, yet they differed a whole world in manners and thinking, and not less so in wealth and rank. The princess sought for conquests, pleased, loved, and was beloved ; the little Welsh girl knew nothing of conquests,—after which she did not strive,—pleased without wishing it, and was beloved without replying to it, or even being aware of it. Morgana was a wise and deeply-learned lady, well versed in all the mysteries of nature, a pupil of the great Merlin, and, to say all in one sentence, an enchantress of the second rank. Genelas, on the contrary, knew no magic but that of her needle and spindle, which she was skilful in using, notwithstanding she was a court-lady. Besides, she willingly remained within the narrow limits then prescribed to

female knowledge, and was on that account so much the lovelier.

The princess was on the point of bringing to a conclusion her seven-and-twentieth amour, while it was only within the few last days that Genelas had gained a kind of twilight knowledge of her first. Sir Carados,—surnamed the arm-breaker, because this sort of damage was the least with which his opponents used to come off,—a hero, as mild in peace as bold in war, had at the last court-festival passed over all the other ladies, and led her out to dance; at parting too he had tenderly squeezed her hand, a point which she did not clearly comprehend, and yet which her heart told her was not without meaning.

Amongst all the inequalities between the two ladies, whom we have thus coupled, was one, that was also the cause of the little esteem in which they both were with Queen Guenevra;—that is, Genelas, on account of her humble manners, was despised; and Morgana, on account of her arrogance, detested.

We have often observed that the sisters of married men stand at best on a footing with step-mothers. These good creatures are always peculiarly jealous of their dear brothers' honour, strict censurers and inexorable judges of every error of those whom love has converted into their relations; and if they happen to be young and handsome enough to rival their sister-in-law in their conquests, then war at once is declared, and not unfrequently they proceed to open hostilities.

Through all these circumstances King Arthur's sister was destined for Guenevra's enemy; the part of overdone courtesy and friendship, which is generally used in the commencement of such hostilities as the cover of real feelings, had long ago been played out between them, and they had got to the second act, namely, that of distance and little sarcasms, as opportunity served, which often degenerated into earnest, and led people to expect the catastrophe of the tragedy in an open rupture.

The princess was never at a loss for biting sallies; once, when King Arthur held his cour

pleniore at Christmas, she seized the cup,—with tolerable boldness for the manners of the ladies at that period,—and drank to Arthur the health of all his brothers, warning him at the same time to drink moderately, that a drop might remain for each of them. Queen Guenevra, as well as the rest of the company, saw perfectly well that her allusion was to all those who had made free with the royal honour; it was only the good-natured king who betrayed by a simple question that the real meaning of the words was a mystery to him, and his crafty wife took care not to open his eyes and ears by the bitter answer which yet trembled upon her lips. She swore, however, in her heart the direst revenge against Morgana, and watched her opportunity so well, that, before the moon had filled her bow with new light, the detested sister-in-law had fallen into her snares.

We have said, my dear friends, Morgana was a fairy of the second order, and we will not fancy you so ignorant as not to see what the name means. It cannot be unknown to you that it is only those spiritual beings who

dwell about us, without being perceived by our grosser senses, those confidants of holy nature, whose mysteries are covered from them by no veil,—that it is only those who deserve the name in its real and important signification. The mere mortals, who only by art subdue the secret powers of nature, are much their inferiors, and are often violently persecuted by them for their presumption in endeavouring to elevate themselves to their level. The former, —so fabled the legends of old,—by immortality, by comprehensive power, and a sort of omniscience, were exalted almost to demigods; the latter always remained weak, mortal creatures, subject to chance and misery, could only secure life by human means, were far from being able to do all they wished, and knew nothing but what they gained by laborious inquiry.

This too was the case with the scholar of the wise Merlin; how else could the schemes, which were brooded against her in Guenevra's brain, have remained a mystery to her? A peep into the great book of the stars would no doubt have shown Morgana the snare laid for her,

and she would then have found the means of avoiding it; but at present she read in no book but the eyes of her seven-and-twentieth lover; nothing existed for her in the world except him; for his sake she sank into the weakness of a common mortal, and, to confess the truth, after so many intrigues, conducted herself in the whole affair very like a little girl who, for the first time, hears from a young man's lips that she is handsome.

Oh, how Queen Guenevra rejoiced at the way in which her enemy laid herself open! She pretended to be blind to the love of Morgana and Guiomar, to make them the more secure, watched all their motions in silence, and looked forward to the moment when it would be in her power to expose the weakness of the enamoured damsel to the whole court, and by this striking proof of his sister's frailty either persuade the king to be deaf for ever to her covert slanders, or else to make him banish from the court a hated spy, whose watchfulness laid such hard restraints on the queen's private pleasures.

That this desired moment might not be let slip, strict injunctions were given to the female courtiers of the third order; all were to seek, to watch, to creep, to listen, and to repeat, that the slippery front of Occasion might not elude their grasp, and all were ready enough for such an occupation. By nature light, crafty, flexible, and inclined to little malicious tricks, they found a pleasure in that which was imposed upon them as a duty; Genelas, indeed, had always behaved so very awkwardly in such matters, that she was now left alone, and the development of the catastrophe was reserved for her, either as a punishment for her dulness, or to put the truth in so much more striking a light through the mouth of simplicity.

That which made the little Welsh girl so stupid now,—particularly now,—in one of the most fashionable points of female education, was not so much her own natural simplicity, not so much the modest lessons instilled into her from childhood by her nurse, as—a love affair of her own. At the last court festival Sir

Carados had again led her out alone to the dance, had again squeezed her hand, met her for several days after at various times, as if by chance, and, latterly, when she was surprised by a storm as she travelled on the queen's affairs, had wrapped her up in his cloak and brought her safely home. So many sweet speeches had passed in these short journeys, that no one but a simple being, like Genelas, could have doubted the knight's real meaning; she, however, was so astonished, so confounded, that she scarcely knew what she said, or what she heard, and that,—that,—we can scarcely write it without blushing,—that she not only received a kiss from Sir Carados, given in the dark, but even returned it.

Genelas was beside herself at her own precipitation; she wept her eyes red, expected the contempt of her lover for this breach of maiden manners, and endeavoured to regain his respect by assumed coyness and diligently avoiding any intercourse with him. But all this found her inexperienced heart with so much

employment, that she had no senses for any thing else, committed a thousand blunders in her office, and, above all, showed very little inclination to interfere in Morgana's matters.

As the court had no lack of other, more effective, agents, the time came on without her aid for the catastrophe of the tragedy in which Morgana and Sir Guiomar were to play the principal parts. Queen Guenevra had assembled her privy council, in which all the above-named ladies had a seat and voice, and opened the sitting with the question,—“What should be done to her who watches with an eye of censure over the actions of others, and at the same time abandons herself in secret to the grossest excesses?”—and all had unanimously voted for death or a public exposure.

“You all know,” continued the queen, “that heroine of virtue, Morgana, and I must tell you I am on the point of tearing from her the veil, which has preserved to her that title.”

“She a heroine of virtue!” said Iselda, bristling up; “I know ladies, who, by the fif-

teen years of subjection in which they have kept an adored lover, much more deserve it."

"And I," exclaimed the Seneschal's fat wife, who was in possession of an ample court chronicle,—“ I could quote more than twenty witnesses of Morgana's virtue, of whom she would not be very proud."

Rosalie and Isabella blushed ; Agnes looked exquisitely simple ; the spouse of Peter, the holy, sent up a pious sigh to heaven ; and the wild Britomarte, jumping up, begged the queen to be more explicit, and to use her aid, if she needed any, in withdrawing the veil from Morgana's love affairs.

"A request," said the queen, "which I must deny ; I have chosen for this office a person whose simplicity, should my project succeed, would make her evidence much less suspicious than yours, and who, if it should fail, will alone bear all the blame, and screen us from the vengeance of the malicious enchantress."

Eleanor and Isabella vaunted that they could annihilate all Morgana's magic with a

single Ave, while Iselda and Rosalie doubted altogether the princess' possessing any such knowledge; but the queen, who feared the loss of the favourable moment, paid no attention to the advice of her counsellors; she order'd the little Genelas to be called, and with a face of violent hurry despatched her to Morgana, desiring her not to be stopped by any thing, but to press on into Morgana's chamber, and if she found that princess not in a state to comply with the queen's request of coming to her, that then she should steal away quietly, and bring back an exact account of the condition in which she had seen her.

Guenevra had taken care so to arrange things, that, immediately upon the dismissal of Genelas, the king with his nobles should be in her chamber, so that he might be present at her return, and witness the unmasking of his sister.

King Arthur knowing nothing of all this, had, as usual, no suspicions, and came into the room at this moment, only because it was the cus-

tomary time for his visit, which, as a very punctual gentleman, he never omitted.

“ My dear lord,” said the queen, approaching him with that respect which artful women ever use to conceal from their husbands that they in fact command them,—“ my dear lord, you find us all assembled here to beguile the remainder of the day in play or dance at your pleasure. Two persons only are wanting to our circle, whom we cannot do without ; I mean your noble sister and the hero Guiomar. I have sent after the first myself, and to the latter you will be pleased to despatch a messenger.”

The king had already turned round to the Seneschal to give him the commission requested by the queen, when the little Genelas, half out of breath and blushing like Aurora, entered the room, and quietly took her place.

“ Have you executed my commission ?” said the queen.

“ No,” replied Genelas, blushing still more deeply.

“ Did you not find the princess then?”

“ Yes,—no,—yes,” stammered the maiden.

“ Oh!” said the Lady Seneschal, “ I will lay any thing our absent little maiden forgot your message by the way, and now does not know how to extricate herself from her embarrassment. Recollect, my child; you were to request the princess to grace this company with her presence, and you have not spoken to her?”

“ No, indeed.”

“ And why not?”

“ I think she was in the bath.”

“ And where?”

“ In truth I do not know; I peeped through the trees, and saw,—saw, that her maidens were around her, amusing her with dance and song.”

“ What nonsense is the child chattering!” exclaimed the queen; “ she looked, and knows not where,—saw, and knows not what.”

“ Allow me, your highness,” said Britomarte, “ to go and fetch you more accurate information. The bath scene is probably in the princess’ garden.”

“That is not necessary,” said Guenevra; “we will all go and see whether Genelas has told us the truth.”

“Indeed, indeed,” said the maiden, “I think I have not lied; thus much at least is certain: the garden was closed, and, but that I was ordered not to stop for any thing, I should hardly have forced my way through the bushes to see what I saw.”

“Fool!” cried the queen; “you know not what you say; you contradict yourself at every word. Come, my lord; we will go and see ourselves.”

“But only consider,” said Genelas, throwing herself at the queen’s feet,—“the princess is in the bath.”

“Very well,” replied the queen; “we will go, and you shall be our guide.”

The fat Lady Seneschal here seized the weeping Genelas by the arm, pulled her up, and dragged her along the well-known way to Morgana’s garden, the whole court following them.

Morgana availed herself of her magic only

to enjoy the pleasures of life in full measure. By means of that her palace was the most splendid, her attendants the most numerous, and her gardens comprised all that the earth has most alluring ; and even her own beauty, as her enviers maintained, was so irresistible only through the power of magic.—“ All deceit and vapour !” Guenevra would often say in a philosophical mood,—“ all deceit and vapour—born from a breath, and just as easily destroyed again by a breath ; nothing, as it was formed by the Creator.”

Adorned with all the attractions of a goddess, the princess would often give splendid festivals in her magic gardens to King Arthur’s court ; but her most splendid celebrations were in the arms of a confidential friend, surrounded by no other witnesses than a part of her own court, who owed their existence to her wand, and at a touch from it would again melt into vapour ; these of course were the zealous servants of her will as long as she left them life, and, as may be supposed, silent, unimportant witnesses of her secret pleasures. It was in this

circle that the innocent Genelas saw the fair enchantress; she had found, as she told them, the palace empty, the garden closed, and had made a way for herself through the bushes and hedges until she got into the centre of an orange grove, which concealed a broad plain in its bosom; in the middle again of this, lofty cedars, interwoven with low myrtle shrubs, shaded a marble bath, where Morgana delighted to refresh herself in the heat of the day.

Genelas peeped through the myrtle hedge, and saw the princess in the bath, surrounded by her shadowy attendants—a heavenly sight even for the eye of a maiden, who was not deficient in charms! But the princess was not alone; upon the green bank, where her suite reclined in picturesque groups, lay the arms of a knight, who was sharing with her the coolness of the limpid waters. The eyes of the modest little Welsh maiden were instantly turned away in terror upon seeing Morgana's bathing companion. She, who grieved so much about a kiss too boldly returned, and who deemed the maiden veil that covered her lovely

face to be so indispensable,—it may be guessed what she thought of the boldness of one of her sex in admitting a man into the very sanctuary, into the bath itself. She hid her face in her dress, flew back quicker than she had come, and in the greatest confusion entered the saloon where Guenevra with her court was waiting for her. The queen had learnt beforehand from her spies that Guiomar had a private interview with Morgana, knew the princess' improvidence, which had not made the place of meeting inaccessible to her envoy, and had purposely chosen the simple Genelas for that office, to crush the offender so much the more heavily by the innocent way in which the maiden would tell the story.

The project, as we have seen, did not altogether succeed. Genelas was too much ashamed at this impudence in one of her own sex, and felt too much repugnance at owning she had witnessed it, to speak with frankness on the occasion. She was as much confused as if she had been the offender; her words, her tears, petitioned them so earnestly to leave the veil upon

Morgana's mysteries, that those, who know not how real innocence behaves—and there were few such at Arthur's court—must have been quite mistaken in her.

Genelas was compelled to show the company the way to Morgana's bath, or rather they knew it already, for they might conclude pretty well where it was from the broken speeches of the abashed maiden.

Morgana was so blinded, that she had not taken the least measures for her security. She had imagined the court was absent on a hunting-party, settled long before, had forgotten to place any shadowy terrors or spiritual guards at the entrance of the orange grove, and held herself safe under the simple protection of a few locks; great, therefore, was her surprise, when on a sudden a thousand witnesses appeared at the edge of the marble bath, some dumb from horror, and others from malignant delight, which latter portion gazed on her and her companion of the bath, without knowing how to express their feelings.

King Arthur lifted up his hands and eyes to

heaven; the knights exerted all their powers of sight to lose nothing of the surprising spectacle; the ladies beat their breasts with averted eyes; and the queen alone had power enough to break the silence.

“Really, princess,” she exclaimed, in a tone such only as triumphant malice can form from lips distorted into bitter scorn,—“really, princess, we surprise you here in a singular condition. Genelas, who brought us hither, said nothing of the state in which we were to find you, or we should have spared our eyes this spectacle.”

Vexation, wrath, and shame fettered the tongue of the surprised Morgana. Sir Guiomar at first hid his face in his hands, till a sort of instinct, which makes every hero grasp after his arms upon an insult, drove him to the edge of the bath to fetch his sword. In the meantime Morgana’s eyes were so far from being fixed to the earth by any modest confusion, that they flashed fire on the surrounders. Revenge was seething in her heart, and doubtless, if she had possessed the power, she would have punished

the gazers in the same way that Cynthia once punished the presumptuous huntsman; indeed she did fill both hands with water, which she scattered about her in a thousand glittering drops; the whole effect however of this manœuvre was, that the bath scene of the new Diana, together with her Endymion and her nymphs, disappeared from the eyes of the spectators in a thin mist, and even the surrounding grove with the whole of the magic country was enveloped in a bluish fog, that by degrees passed off, and let the curious company see where they really stood—namely, on a wide plain of yellow sand, scorched up by the burning sun, and having here and there a few dusty bushes that spread out their thin withered foliage. In fact it was precisely the same desert spot that Morgana had originally found here, and by her magic rod converted into gardens.

It may be imagined with what confusion the assembly looked about them, and with what discomfiture they made their way back again under the heat of the mid-day sun. But at the same time Morgana had not been able to effect

with her wand that which she had probably intended,—oblivion of the past, or at least a doubt of its reality. All present knew perfectly well that they had been awake and not asleep, and all, to the infinite delight of the vindictive queen, protested, that, while they looked upon Morgana as the greatest of magicians, they at the same time deemed her the most shameless creature upon the face of God's earth. King Arthur betrayed his thoughts only by a troubled silence and angry looks; and it was well that the princess had taken herself off with all belonging to her, or else banishment or death would have been the inevitable punishment of her offence. In fact she had left nothing of hers behind. In the spots, formerly occupied by her extensive palaces, nothing was now to be seen but vacuity, and even the presents, which she had made to the king and queen in gentler hours, had vanished from their jewel chests.

Guenevra's project had thus succeeded; she had revenged herself upon her enemy, and had removed her from the court, perhaps for ever, but still she was not quite satisfied: it seemed

to her that her revenge and triumph might have been yet more complete; many little circumstances might have been absent from the whole adventure, and as she was accustomed, in the manner of great ladies, to make others suffer for her discontent, and had just then no other object on which to pour out the cup of her wrath, the storm burst upon the poor little Genelas; she was that very evening cited before the great council of the ladies, tried, and condemned. A thousand sins occurred, which on this occasion were all brought forward to her account; but the most important charge, or at least that which possessed a little semblance of truth, was, that she had a secret understanding with the enchantress, and probably participated in her excesses. From the very beginning she had so reluctantly mingled in the plot against the princess, had at last, when others had imperceptibly involved her in it, behaved with such simplicity, had so earnestly sought to hide the offender's shameful trespasses, sparing neither prayers nor tears to keep the rest of the court from the way which she had first taken, that

her judges deemed it could not be otherwise than that she was a creature of Morgana, an enemy of the queen, and consequently as wicked and as vicious as those whose part, in the simplicity of her heart, she had so anxiously taken.

We, however, know the motives of her conduct; at least we can answer for it, that sympathy with Morgana's errors was far from having any place in her innocent heart, though they could not, and would not, see this in the court of Arthur. The sentence, pronounced upon her conduct in the queen's private chamber, soon communicated itself to every heart, however much interested in her favour before; she was with general consent banished from court, and abandoned to distress and misery. Poor creature! to complete her wretchedness, it was only wanting that she should know the fortune which had that day awaited her, and which had by this fatal event alone been anticipated.

Sir Carados, whose heart cleaved to the beautiful maiden, had already spoken of his passion to King Arthur, and intended this even-

ing to make a formal application to the queen; but now his beloved appeared in so hateful a light!—what his own eyes could not find, that was supplied by the opinion of others; no one was there to defend the accused, and thus it happened, that, if not his love, yet all his designs in her favour vanished, and he saw her banishment, not indeed without secret tears, but without any effort to defend or save her.—“ I loved beauty without virtue,” he said to himself mournfully;—“ loved a deceptive shadow of the brain, that I must now forget. But there can be little virtue in women since Genelas is vicious.”—So saying, he girded on his sword, mounted his horse, and set out to lose the feelings of grief and love in the tumult of warlike adventures.

In the meantime Genelas left the court of King Arthur, as poor as she had entered it, or rather much poorer; then, she possessed a total freedom from care, ignorance of human necessities, and all the evils arising out of them, together with a superabundance of joyful hopes; but, alas! these inestimable goods are the property of childhood only, which we must entirely

leave behind us on entering the limits of manhood or womanhood.

Robbed of every means of honest subsistence, driven out into the wide world, alone and friendless, the poor wanderer could not be without care, and could hardly possess any great stock of hopes for the future. She wandered many a day and many a night, living sparingly on that which she had saved up in happier times, and which was hardly worth naming. It is true, indeed, that King Arthur had sent after her a travelling gift, but her enemies had taken care to intercept it. Genelas was too handsome to have friends; it was no secret that she had pleased many eyes, and above all, the black sparkling eyes of the brave Carados—reason enough for most ladies, even for Queen Guenevra, to hate her mortally, and to rejoice that this feeling could just now be so admirably concealed under the mask of the love of virtue.

It was late one evening that the pilgrim, on reaching a village, felt an excess of weariness, which made her apprehend the conclusion of

all her travels. She had now wandered for many days with scanty nourishment, little rest, exposed to the sun's heat and the chilling rains; what wonder is it then that at last her strength failed, and she sank down, almost senseless, before a cottage, which stood alone by the roadside, about twenty paces from the village? Her dying moans excited the attention of the person within, who opened a little window in the door, and asked, "Who's there?"

"Alas!" sighed Genelas, "a sick wanderer. Help! help! or it is all over with me."

The inhabitant of the hovel seemed for a long time to be taking counsel with herself what was to be done in this case. At length the door opened, and a female figure came forth, whose appearance had little prepossessing in it, and whose manners evinced any thing rather than hospitality.

"What do you want?" asked the woman in a rough voice.

"Alas! every thing!" replied Genelas, who was scarcely able to speak any longer.

"How?" cried the woman, who now held the

light more closely to her guest—"So young, and in such a plight! You are a pretty one indeed! Away with you! Get from my door! my cottage is no place for such creatures."

It is impossible to say what idea the woman really entertained of the young pilgrim, but she hastily turned her back upon her, and, hurrying into the hovel, slammed the door to with violence.

"Have pity! pity!" cried the deserted Genelas; "by hospitality some have harboured angels."

"Pity! hospitality!" grumbled the old woman from within;—"I should gain much good by that! Formerly, indeed, I was such a fool, and well I have been rewarded for it!"

The poor little traveller continued to weep and implore, till at length the woman handed her a draught of water through the opening in the door, and she raised herself with difficulty to receive it.

"Is there no other place here in the village where I could find refuge?" asked Genelas, when she had drunk the water.

“ Oh, yes,” replied the peasant—“ Besides the public-house, we have here a very rich lady, who harbours all beggars, and finds a pleasure in it : see the great red mansion yonder with the two great lime trees, and try if you can drag yourself to it ; she will not turn you away.”

Genelas opened her weary eyes to look for the great house of the rich lady, but could see nothing more than a neat little cottage, which only envy, ignorance, or scorn, could have called a mansion. She nevertheless thanked the peasant for her information, and slowly raised herself to creep to the place which had been pointed out to her as the abode of hospitality.

At the first knock, after a little preliminary inquiry through the window, the door was undone. The person who opened it,—to all appearance the only inhabitant of the cottage,—was a friendly old woman, whose neat clothing did, indeed, evince a sort of rustic prosperity, but whose looks were too kind and condescending for Genelas to fancy her the rich lady which she had been said to be.

“Come in, come in, my child,” she exclaimed, on seeing that the pilgrim hesitated to cross her threshold; “the night is bitter, and I see you are weary.”

“Oh, yes; weary to death!” said Genelas, clinging to the wall to keep herself from falling. But the hospitable old woman placed a seat, and invited her to sit down; then she fetched milk from the cellar, brought a bath for her wounded feet, and stood before her ready to serve, as once Abraham had stood before the angels.

Genelas enjoyed the refreshment prepared for her, without being able to return thanks. It was only her streaming eyes, and her arms stretched out from time to time towards her benefactress, that testified how fully she felt the comforts of her situation.

The kind-hearted peasant treated her with the greatest tenderness, spared her all unnecessary talking, ventured no idle questions, gave her supper quietly, and as quietly put her to bed. In short, she played the part of a mother, when the part is played most affectionately.

It was almost mid-day when she awoke, and even then she could not resolve to leave her bed; she saw her hostess many times stealing to the half-opened door, and peeping in to see if her guest wanted any thing; this told her it was time to rise, that she might not fall into the ill repute of laziness.

She found her hostess, whose name was Rose, planted at her spinning-wheel, and was received by her as if she had been an old acquaintance. Genelas was now prepared for the questions, "who?—whence?—and whither?" but the old woman asked nothing, and only seemed occupied with the care of the weak pilgrim, without minding who was the object of her benevolence. On the third day, Genelas, having perfectly recovered, began with a trembling voice to talk of going on farther, and when this idea was contested on the plea of continued weakness, she asked on the fourth day for work.

"My child," said the old woman, in answer to this request, "I know not how you may be situated, but to judge from appearances, you may as well stay with me as with

any one else, and that without farther thinking on the matter. If this be your opinion, you must in truth have some occupation; for idleness brings no good. But, as a guest, I cannot burthen you with work, and under this name you may remain as long as you choose, without my allowing you to have any other trouble than that of care for your own well-being."

These words, spoken with a half-laughing, half-serious mien, touched the heart of the young maiden. She folded the old woman in her arms, and called her mother, and it was agreed between them that the name of guest should be dropped for ever. The pilgrim declared she would sooner live here than any where; and thus she was installed in the right of sharing the labours of the house and spindle, and enjoying the profits with her hostess.

Weeks had thus passed, when one day, in an hour of their common labour, Genelas expressed her surprise at Rose's want of curiosity.—"My dear mother," she said, "am I so utterly strange

to you, so utterly indifferent to you, that you do not once ask me who I am?"

"My child," replied the old woman, "you have told me your name, nor are you otherwise unknown to me. I perceive you are retired, pious, modest, and grateful; the other points are trifles, which you will tell me when it seems necessary to you, and after which I should not inquire, though we should remain together till the day of our death."

Genelas saw that her new friend well understood the minutest points of hospitality, and did not hesitate to reward such forbearance by a circumstantial narrative of her adventures at King Arthur's court.

The old woman listened attentively without interrupting her, and at the conclusion said, "Only one question—allow me only one question. Are you really innocent of the suspicion of having made common cause with the vicious Morgana?"

"I can give you no other surety for my innocence except my words and my condition,"

replied Genelas, with a melancholy glance at her wretched garments.

“ You are right,” replied Rose ; “ vice generally rewards its adherents better, and your poverty is an honourable pledge, that I do not overlook : indeed I threw out these doubts only to see what weapons you would use to defend your innocence. Your eyebrows were not wildly elevated, your face was not covered with an angry glow, your looks continued mild and friendly, and even these trials you have stood with honour. Know then, that, from all I now have learnt of you, I form great expectations for you in the future ; only wait the course of time, and all will be made manifest.”

Rose and her adopted daughter passed their time in quiet industry without any adventures. One thing only troubled them—the neighbour, in the house a few yards from the village, who had repulsed the wandering Genelas so roughly on her first arrival, began to visit their cottage more frequently than she had done before. Genelas could not look upon her enemy with favourable eyes, and Rose seemed to have yet

other reasons for disliking her company. One day she said to the young maiden,—“ This woman is my cousin, but, when I have told you my little story, you will see I have slight cause to be fond of her. Thus much is certain; envy and avarice are her leading passions, and she visits us for no other purpose than to spy out the mysteries which she suspects exist with us, and to turn the knowledge to our injury.”

Genelas had never heard her hostess speak of any one in this tone before, and believed her; but Rose, who desired no blind belief, and knew no better mode of convincing Genelas of the truth than by the promised narration, put fresh flax upon the distaff, and began as follows:

Rose's Story.

I am by birth a German, and first saw the light in a little village in the depths of the Harz forest. While yet a child I lost my parents, and left the peaceful hut, which now

fell to their creditors, for the cottage of an aunt, who was at the same time my godmother, and who, therefore, could not avoid taking charge of me. I and her daughter,—the very neighbour against whom I have just been warning you,—together with an old maid-servant, made up her whole establishment; and we might have lived quietly and comfortably enough, if stubbornness, avarice, and quarrelsomeness had not got the mastery over my godmother. She had unwillingly taken me into her house, grudged me the morsel of bread she really gave me, required of me things I had never learnt, and scolded incessantly at my awkwardness, without telling me how to do things better. Her dislike increased as I grew up and by the gentleness of my manners gained the affection of her friends and neighbours in preference to her own daughter, a spoiled child, who had malice and obstinacy inscribed upon her features.

The old servant died, and they freed me from the finer labours of the needle and spinning-wheel, to put upon me the dirty and toilsome household-work. Willingly could I have

submitted to this aggravation of my lot, if it had not proceeded from so melancholy a cause. I missed the deceased at every turn, for she was the only one in the house who gave me a friendly look; she had taught me moreover the little that she knew, and in the evening, before I went to bed, would tell me many a tale of pleasing, fearful import.

My toils and my grief had no cessation but on Sunday, when my godmother and her daughter went to church. At such times, accustomed never to be idle, I took up the maiden work of the spinning-wheel, which was no longer allowed me, and always deemed myself higher and better when at this cleanly occupation. But the threads that I drew out were coarse and unequal; I had seen the girls of the village fill the spindle with yarn fine and delicate as silk; and I wept over my own awkwardness.

My seat, in these sweet hours of melancholy solitude, was generally under the lindens by the side of a well, which was no longer used, and was more than half choked up with moss and bushes. It was natural enough that the vi-

cinity of this well should bring to my mind certain legends, that the deceased, whom I here so often lamented, had in other times related for my amusement.—“ Know,” she would often say to me, when admonishing me to industry and order,—“ know that, for time out of mind, a spirit has dwelt in these parts, called by the people the Lady of the Veil; she ascends from the side of yonder well, steals through the houses, and examines whether the servants have done their work properly; should she find any uncleanliness in chamber or kitchen, at table or hearth, she pinches the lazy maids, strips off the bed-clothes, and lays them naked on the stones; or, should she find on holy eves, or at the end of the week, unspun flax or unfinished needlework, she either dips them in the mire of the duck-pond, or sets fire to them, so that at times barns and houses have suffered by her love of industry. But, then, order, diligence, and cleanliness, never remain unrewarded by her, and not unfrequently the tidy maids, when they carry water at sunrise into the clean kitchen, find silver pennies in their pails, with

which they buy ribbons and shoes, and trim themselves out on feast-days.”

Such were the tales of my old kind-hearted instructress, and I believed her with all my heart. I had never, indeed, found any of the silver pennies, notwithstanding all my industry and struggles after such a reward, but I was so much the oftener pulled and pinched, for any little neglect, by my godmother, who was the spirit's substitute on such occasions. I had sometimes too found dirt in unfinished work ; and once, when I fell asleep over flax-combing, the flax caught fire, and, upon awaking in a fright, I was scarcely able to put it out, and so escape the merited punishment.

Things of this sort taught me to believe in the rigid judge of order and industry, and made me extremely conscientious in the performance of my duties. The punishments I had experienced, and from the rewards I promised myself much in the future.

I took care never to sit down to work by the well till the house was swept from garret to cellar, my face and hands seven times

washed in the neighbouring spring, and I had put on my cleanest every-day clothes. Then I would sit and spin, grieving that I could not spin better; and when at times I succeeded more than usual, I would look about me proudly, and my eyes would rest upon that corner of the well, where, according to the legend, the spirit used to rise, as if I meant to challenge her to witness my good conduct.

One day, after I had been spinning for a long time, and the place of the sun told me that my tormentors would soon return, I was seized with a sudden sadness at the idea of what I might then have to suffer from them. Their sky had not been very clear in the morning; what had I to expect then from their afternoon, knowing, as I did, that they always returned in a bad humour from their devotions? I carried on these images far, thought on the past and the future, and burst out into tears. My hands sank into my lap, the reel broke from the spindle, and tumbled into the well, so that I heard it rebound once or twice from the sides, and fall to the bottom. Full of terror, I awoke

from my dreaming. If with the consciousness of having committed no fault I had trembled at the idea of their bad temper, what must I now fear, after the loss of this valued utensil? I was so poor that I possessed no spinning implements of my own; the wheel, at which I had been spinning, with all its furniture, belonged to my young cousin, who had no objection to my hiding her laziness by my diligence, though without rewarding me with a single kind look for it; and there was no doubt she would reckon with me for the leaden reel as if it had been of solid gold.

Full of despair, and quite uncertain what to do, I sprang up, and bent over the edge of the well, in whose depths I thought I perceived my lost treasure. At the same time I heard the voices of my cousins, who were coming home over the next field, and I cannot tell whether it was fear of them, or anxiety to regain the lost reel, that brought me to the desperate resolution of plunging into the abyss.

Just as little am I able to give any account of the thoughts which followed this rash act;

it seems to me as if I had ceased to think, and had no other cessation than that of unbroken falling, which, from its length, might, I fancied, have brought me to the very centre of the earth. About me was utter darkness; my senses now utterly failed me; and I did not recover till I received a violent blow upon coming at last to the solid ground. My eyes were still closed; for a time I thought, as I felt no pain from the fall, that the whole adventure was a dream, and was not convinced of the contrary till I had recovered, and, upon looking about me, found myself in a country that was perfectly strange to me.

It was a wonderful place, illumined by a lovely twilight, most grateful to the eyes. Here were soft, flowery banks; there, rustling leaves and running streams; in the distance, an extensive building and blue mountains on the horizon: but the outlines of all I saw were so soft! every murmur I heard so gentle! the perfumes I breathed so fine! and all things I touched slipped so gently from under my hands!—that I fancied myself in the land of

shadows, where the objects retreat from the grosser senses.

I collected myself, and went on to the mansion, where I hoped for an explanation of the doubts, which were every moment increasing with me, though at the same time I felt an inexpressible delight; the calmness, which rested on the still country around, seemed to have passed into my inmost soul. That, which had hitherto disquieted my mind, now lay as if in the distance behind me, while before me spread an interminable plain, rich in the fairest prospects.

In this manner I wandered a whole summer's day, as it seemed to me, and without reaching the object of my travel, or feeling any disquiet at its continued remotion. Judging from the still, holy feeling which then possessed me, I should have deemed myself a being of a higher order, if hunger and thirst had not convinced me to the contrary. No sooner was I conscious of the desire for nourishment, than the means of satisfying it presented themselves. Trees, laden with sweet cherries and odorous pears, inclined their boughs to me, that seemed ready

to break with their burthen, and invited me to enjoyment. My hand was already stretched out to break off what they offered, when I was suddenly restrained by the doubt whether it was allowable for me to plunder the property of another ; for the castle, now close beside me, was a proof I was in no uninhabited wilderness. I therefore curbed my appetite, and contented myself with a small portion of the fruit, shaken off by the wind upon the grass, and in gratitude for the refreshment, set up the fallen props under the heavy branches, that they might not lose any of their sweet burthen.

I was not so moderate with a fresh fountain by which I had to pass ; I took as much as I could drink, though not with the golden vessel that stood there, but with the hollow of my hand. The quenching of my thirst increased my hunger, and the objects of excitement grew more and more powerful, for I had now reached the fore-court of the castle. Wide halls extended along the side, from one of which a bright fire gleamed most alluringly, and here I entered, expecting to find some of the inha-

bitants. All, however, was solitude, though the delicious scent that came from the sauce-pans convinced me that a supper was preparing for some people, and people who perhaps were not so hungry as I was.

I looked every where after the cook, and now ventured boldly to the fire; but it was not greediness to taste any of the cookery that made me so free and easy; I saw, with the anger of a good housewife, that the spits were standing still, and the ragouts burning, and I hastened to set all to rights, though not without secret exclamations against the cook's carelessness. This being done, I hurried away, that I might not yield to the suggestions of hunger; but the conquest cost me a deep sigh; I could not help turning back, and sweeping off a few crumbs from the dresser, which I swallowed hastily, and then went farther.

I now approached the double steps, which led to the entrance of the house, and I ascended them without reflection. When, however, I had continued my way, and found on all sides more magnificence than I had ever witnessed before,

I began to suspect that I was approaching very high people, such as I had not been accustomed to meet with, and from whom, therefore, I could not expect the best reception.—“After all,” said I to myself, “what would you here, and what brought you to the desperate resolution of plunging into the well?—A lost trifle. Will you find it here? Dare you ask for it?—Yes, indeed, it will sound well, when you come before the owner of this castle, and say, ‘Gracious sir,—or, gracious lady,—have you seen a reel that tumbled into your well?’—For shame, Rose! Scorn and contempt will be the reward of your boldness and simplicity; it were better you should see how you may re-ascend the well, and let fate dispose of you as it chooses. But then how shall I come before my cousin with her mutilated spinning-wheel? If I had but the lost lead I should be contented, and go back again without fear.”

Such were my thoughts, and I looked disquietedly about me, as if seeking for that I had lost. In a moment my eyes were struck by an open door, leading into a neat light room,

filled with all manner of spinning utensils, a sight that attracted me irresistibly. Heavens ! what splendours I perceived there !—The spinning-room of an empress could not be better provided. Flax and webs of the finest kinds, distaffs and spindles of the most costly materials and finest workmanship, and above all, a whole army of neat little reels, formed after all the rules of art, to give motion to the most awkward spindle.

“ Yes,” I exclaimed, clasping my hands, “ here is a magazine ! Had I but one of these beautiful things, I should be contented. But some of them are of gold, and some of silver ; no, they are not for my purpose ; mine was of lead, covered with green varnish. But stop ; these resemble the lost one to a hair ; I must see if I cannot find mine amongst them.”

Upon this I sought amongst the twin-brothers of my lost reel, which I knew accurately by a little mark, but without finding it, and I went away melancholy, saying to myself, “ I could, indeed, make good my loss here, for my cousin does not recollect her spinning utensils so very

accurately ; a little resemblance would be sufficient for her,—but then you must not steal.—Oh, if I could only find my own.”

“What are you doing here in my spinning-chamber?” exclaimed a fearful voice behind me, just as I was crossing the threshold, and shutting the door to avoid any farther temptation. I turned round full of terror, and saw a tall female figure, swathed in a thousand clothes, who repeated her question, threatening me with her long bony finger. This costume told me at once whom I had before me. The appearance answered exactly to the description of the well-spirit, as I had it from my old instructress, and a cold shuddering seized me.

“Gracious lady!” I exclaimed, falling upon my knees——

“Call me not *gracious*,” she cried, “you see I do not deserve the name.”

“Lady of the Veils,” I continued——

“Call me not so,” she exclaimed in a still more fearful voice : “that is a nickname, borrowed from my dress, and I will not suffer it. Above all, seek for no excuses, but tell me in

few words what you want, although I know it all without your telling."

"Then you must know," I said with trembling voice, "that I had no intention of robbing you; I only sought amongst your goods for my own property, and, as I could not find it, was going away again."

"It is well," she replied; "to-morrow you shall have it, and be dismissed. For the present, follow me; you shall eat with me."

At the word *eat*, my heart jumped with joy, for fear and terror had not been able to drive away my hunger. I followed into the innermost of many beautiful chambers, where she ordered me to prepare the table, finding fault with me the whole time in the most vehement manner; I was, however, used to this with my godmother, listened in silence, and did as she desired.

"Have you shaken my trees?" she demanded.

"No, lady; I propped up the bending branches."

"And have you forborne from picking?"

“ I tasted a few pears that lay upon the grass.”

“ Have you stolen the gold-cup from my spring?”

“ I did not touch it, but I drank much and often out of the hollow of my hand, for I was thirsty.”

“ How are things going on in the kitchen?”

“ I basted the game, and stirred the ragouts, for the cooks were out of the way; I turned your cakes too in the oven, because they were on the point of burning.”

“ Did you taste any?”

“ No; I scraped together a few crumbs to appease my hunger.”

“ That you should not have done; but it is well, and you may serve up supper.”

Thus I saw myself on a sudden, without any previous discussion, in the service of a wonderful mistress, and accommodated myself to it as well as I could. I went into the kitchen, got every thing ready, served up the meal, and placed myself behind her chair to wait upon her; but she bade me, in a rough tone, sit down

opposite to her, and eat with her.—“Do you think,” said she, helping me at the same time very plentifully,—“do you think I do not know what I say? I asked you to be my guest, and there’s an end of it.”

I ate and drank as moderately as a hungry person could do, and answered her few questions with brevity and promptness. Upon rising from table she said, “Undress me,”—and I applied myself with trembling, but without impatience, to the arduous task of shelling, as it were, a thin, and almost impalpable, body from a world of clothes. Nature had wasted little that was material upon the visible part of her, and seemed to have been lavish only in a superabundant mass of hair, which was as entangled as if no comb had passed through it since the first day of its growth. All this was to be put in order, and a silver comb with a golden brush was given me for the task, which was really no slight one.

I set to work with the greatest care and patience, and had the pleasure of seeing the lady smile approbation upon me, when, after

four hours' toil, the locks curled under my fingers, and shadowed, not ungracefully, the pale thin face. Upon the whole, the housewife—for so she would be called by me—was now much more friendly than at first, and, when I had put her to bed, addressed me as follows :

“ Rose, you have conducted yourself well, yet not wholly without fault. You must remember the feelings that delighted you upon your first entrance into my realms; they were the feelings of the blessed, and such you might have enjoyed for ever, if you had been able to resist the appetites of the body. You did, indeed, restrain hunger and thirst within the bounds of moderation, but you did not wholly subdue them; had you been able to do so, you had never returned to the upper world, but remained here in the kingdom of shadows, when, as you may easily believe, I should have appeared to you in another form than now, and talked to you in another manner. As it is, you must return to the life of wretchedness; but your visits to me are not forbidden, whenever you find courage enough to plunge into the

well. The trials, which you have to-day experienced, are for your benefit; I love you, and would wish to see you perfect; whether you will be so, rests with yourself. But, not to leave you without some recompense for all you have endured here to-day, see what I give you."

With these words she pressed something into my hand, and bade me go to sleep at the foot of her bed.

I could not forbear examining the lady's gift by the light of the bed-room lamp, and, to my great astonishment, found nothing but the lost reel.—“ But it is well,” said I to myself; “ and in fact it is the best thing she could give me, for, without it, how could I appear before my cousin?”

With these thoughts I fell asleep. Soon after I was awakened by sundry thumps and pinches, which, as I could tell with my eyes yet closed, must come from the hands of my godmother. I looked about me, and saw that I was still sitting by the brink of the well, the rock at my side, the spindle and reel in my

lap, while before me stood my cousin, together with some neighbours, who were falling upon me without mercy.

“ Lazy sluggard !” cried my godmother, “ we have looked for you over the whole house without finding you ; nay, we have even been here at the well without seeing you, and now after all we meet you in the very same place. I suppose you can make yourself invisible, or else have some lurking-places of your own. Away with you to your work ; Monday has not the same privileges as his predecessor.”

I obeyed, but knew not what to make of the language of these women, or of my adventures in the country of the Lady of the Veils. It seemed impossible for me to consider the last a dream, and yet I had not the least circumstance to prove its reality. Nor could I reconcile the time, which I thought I had passed below, with that, in which they had in vain sought for me upon the earth ; the first appeared to me to be longer than a day and night ; the latter, scarcely the duration of from morning till evening. The

whole week long I pondered upon this while at my household labours, and longed for the Sunday, when I might better meditate in my solitude by the well.

All my reflection, however, served to no other purpose than to convince me I had been dreaming. I grieved much at this. Notwithstanding all the little vexations I had met with in the twilight fields of the under world, they were yet so delightful to me, the mistress of them was at last so friendly to me!—and then she had professed love for me, and invited me to visit her, things which were unusual to me, and the recurrence of which I most fervently desired. My longing at length got to such a pitch, that I was many times upon the point of descending into the well, to convince myself whether all these pleasant things had been dreams or reality; but a glance at the peril, I was going to expose myself to at random, always frightened me back again; the descent itself, setting every thing else aside, was by no means agreeable; the mud, the toads and frogs in the well, made the mere looking down into it ter-

rible, and thus the desperate deed was never carried into effect. Still, however, the seat by the well continued to be my favourite resort, and the thoughts of the shadowy fields and their mistress a sort of mental festival.

Now came a time when the meditations on my subterranean friend were joined to another subject that did not less interest me. A detachment of soldiers was quartered in our village, and, though I was not handsome, I was young, gentle, and neatly dressed, things which drew many eyes upon me, notwithstanding the care of my aunt to prevent it. None, however, of my admirers pleased me but the tall Martin, a young fellow who united to a well-made figure a heart full of goodness and benevolence, that entirely won my affection. He was billeted in our cottage, so that it was impossible I should not sometimes see him, unless I was actually locked up. He began in all earnestness to speak of love and marriage, and although it had not come so far between us as that I had answered him with the one emphatic monosyllable, yet my heart spoke for him the more

decidedly; the Sundays, in particular—when he went to church with the others, and I was left at home alone—were dedicated so entirely to a conversation with him in my fancy, that the Lady of the Veils became only a secondary idea, which I was too simple to connect with his to any advantage.

But my cousin Magdalene, my godmother's daughter, saw our lodger with as favourable eyes as he saw me, and played precisely the same part with him that he played with me. She followed him every where, and made him proposals of love and marriage, which he as little answered as I answered his. It must have struck her that I was more fortunate than herself, and the hatred, which she had always felt for me, now reached its highest pitch. She daily sought occasion for attacking me with words and blows; one Sunday, instead of going to church, she hid herself in the house, fearing I might use this opportunity of a secret interview with Martin, and fell upon me so furiously, as I sate spinning by the well, that, in my despair I plunged into it without any considera-

tion.—“ I must die,” said I to myself, “ under the hands of this fury ; it is better, therefore, to perish here !”—“ Or,”—whispered something within me,—“ find again the place where you were once so happy.”

This was my last thought as I fell ; for the thickening air and the incessant plunging soon robbed me of all recollection, and I did not recover till I reached the ground, or rather was received by a pair of soft arms.

“ So !” said a friendly voice.—“ Were such violent means requisite to bring you back again to me ?”

I opened my eyes, and saw myself in the arms of my good friend, the Lady of the Veils. She was not now so fearfully thin as upon our first acquaintance, was much less enveloped in clothes, and wore a countenance of good humour.

“ I bade you,” said she, casting at me a glance of assumed severity,—“ I bade you visit me again ; why have you not done so ?”

“ Gracious lady, I held all the good I ex-

perienced with you for a dream, and did not like to set my life upon the hazard."

"It is well. That you may not again think you have been in a dream, and that you may not again be compelled to risk your life in leaping into the abyss, take this ring, which, when you stand upon the brink of the well, will bring you to me as often as you choose.—But now go. They are anxiously seeking for you in the upper world.—Or would you rather remain with me?"

"No, gracious lady," I replied; for the thought of Martin quickly recurred to me, and I could not expect to see him there.

"Or," continued she, "have you any other favour to ask of me?"

"No, gracious lady. At least I cannot recollect any thing at the moment."

"Go then and bethink yourself, and return to me soon to let me know your wishes. Now go and rejoice those that are seeking for you."

Hereupon she led me along a dark ascent, and brought me into a cave, which had an out-

let in the middle of the well ; so short was the time of our walk, that I could not at all reconcile it with my long falling. Above, I heard the voices of Magdalene, my godmother, and many of her neighbours, but none sounded so sweetly to me as that of Martin, who by a few words expressed the despair into which the news of my loss had plunged him.

“ I will leap into the well myself,” he said, “ if I do not find her. Yet, hold ; let down the bucket, and I will place myself in it to seek her below ; perhaps she is hanging somewhere by the clothes, and may yet be saved.”

“ For heaven’s sake, Martin,” I cried below, “ do not risk your life ; for here is nothing save mud and poisonous reptiles ; but lower the bucket, and draw me up ; I have sustained no injury.”

A cry of joy from Martin replied to my exclamation. My cousins remarked that they had thought from the first it was of no consequence, and the leaping into the well was merely a malicious trick of mine, to cause them alarm and anxiety.

After such a prologue, it may be easily imagined what my reception was from my tormentors. From Martin it was so much the more cordial; but I drew back gravely, for his turbulent joy offended my modesty.

This adventure, however, had brought us nearer to each other. I knew how dearly he loved me, and he might form a tolerable guess at my feelings towards him; but we had no farther opportunities of conversing together, for we were watched with all the eyes of Argus, and I could no longer stay at home on Sundays. Hitherto I had not been able to go to church from want of a cloak, but now my cousin Magdalehne willingly lent me hers, that she might get rid of me, and have a pretext to stay at home and brood projects against me in respect to Martin.

Strong objections, too, were shown to my sitting by my well, and I was for a long time forced to defer my promised visit to the Lady of the Veils, till at last I hit upon the idea of hazarding a visit to her in the night. For this I made all my preparations beforehand in

secret. I got ready a cake, a thing for which I was famous; for I said to myself, I must do something in honour of the good Lady of the Veils, and at the same time show her my dexterity.

I now crept out of the house, and took my way to the well, when it suddenly occurred to me that I had forgotten one thing, and I sate down by the brink to meditate upon it.

“Suppose,” said I to myself,—“suppose she should ask if you have thought what favour you would request of her. Silly creature, not to have reflected upon this before!—Which would you choose of all the things you wish for?—Rose, Rose, choose wisely, that you may not repent.”

After a few minutes' reflection, I exclaimed, “Now then I see it. Martin loves me—that is certain,—and would marry me, but that we both are poor, and must not, therefore, think of it. Even if he should get enough in war to buy a farm, and marry me, still I should be a poor girl without a dowry; besides, I am awkward, and should bring him little profit with

my labour. I will ask the Lady of the Veils to make me the most skilful spinner in the land; then Martin will cultivate the fields, while I work at home and make money, and we shall be people well to do in the world."

My resolution, which bore the mark of the greatest simplicity, was now taken. I turned the ring as I had been taught, and in a moment found myself with my subterranean friend. I gave her the cake with a profound courtesy; she received it with a benevolent smile, and at her desire I preferred my request.

She looked at me with eyes of wonder, and smiled, as she said, "Poor little simple soul! And this then is all you request? Your wish shall be granted, yet that does not exclude you from making others; but first go and attend to my affairs. Prop up my trees, water my flowers, and get my meal ready, that I may eat, and we will then see farther."

I did as I was ordered; and the friendly lady condescended to seat herself at the spinning-wheel to instruct me. Afterwards I combed, undressed, and put her to bed, and then laid

myself at her feet, when she said, "Sleep well, awake in the upper world, and return soon, that I may go on with my instructions."

"Yes, gracious lady," I replied, "but I am afraid that my aunt will use me ill when I awake, for I have been long absent."

She bade me be without fear, and I fell asleep.

My slumber was short and invigorating, and, when I awoke, the morning was beginning to look gray upon the windows. I got up in terror, and set about my household work, for, after the multitude of things I had seen and learnt in the lower world, I feared that I must have been absent a whole day and two nights. I was, however, convinced to the contrary, and perceived that more could be done with time in the place where I had been than in the upper world.

I burned with desire to try my newly-acquired art, and, as soon as I dared, set myself at the spinning-wheel. Magdalene, who, for some time, had learnt spinning in the city, mocked my awkwardness as usual; but how

was she surprised on seeing me load the rock with the greatest neatness, and fill my spindle in a moment with the finest yarn! Every one came to see me spin, and I had the honour to remain this and the following days at the wheel, for my aunt saw plainly that I should bring her more profit by my spindle than by doing the coarse work of the house, which was now turned over to a maid.

In a short time I was so famous for the fineness of my work, that my aunt gained by it considerably. This, however, did not improve my situation; my two relations were still avaricious and cruel to me, and I was obliged to sit up half the night, because, with all my industry, I could not do enough in the day to satisfy the avarice of my hard task-mistress.

This deprived me of the opportunity of visiting my benefactress as frequently as I wished, and of being fully initiated in the mysteries of the spinning-wheel. At times, however, I managed it. But I never went without carrying a cake, which she seemed to enjoy, and never left her without acquiring some new skill, for

upon her allowing me a second wish, I thought of the loom, the knowledge of which also she imparted to me, thereby considerably increasing the profit I brought into the house of my god-mother.

As I grew more intimate with the Lady of the Veils, our conversation became at times unreserved, and she never dismissed me without asking if I had not a secret to disclose to her?—Upon my always answering, “no,” she would admonish me to be as cautious towards others as towards herself.—Ah! whenever she questioned me so closely, I always thought upon my Martin; but how could I venture to mention his name to her?

Owing to the incredible quantity of work imposed upon me since my increasing dexterity, I had almost ceased to see my lover; in the grief, which this caused me, I had no consolation but my visits to my subterranean mistress, who seemed to grow fonder and fonder of me, and in her quiet domains every tormenting passion was lulled to rest.

One day I found her melancholy; our repast

and common work were despatched almost without a word, and she dismissed me with tears in her eyes. Again she urged her former questions,—“ Would I remain with her?—had I any secret to communicate?”—then followed the usual admonition, and the parting kiss, with which she now often honoured me.

“ Alas !” she said, “ I fear I shall not see you again. Be cautious, and, for fear of the worst, take, in memory of me, this golden spindle ; it will make you rich ; but be careful not to part with it, for, in losing it, you lose all claim to my protection.”

I kissed and wetted with my tears her hand, which was now no longer a fleshless skeleton, as in the beginning of our acquaintance.—“ It grieves me to my heart,” I said, “ to see you weep, but surely you have no reason. This dear ring can bring me back again to you in the very next hour after I have left you. Oh, it is dearer to me than that which my bridegroom will one day give me at the holy altar.”

“ Rose ! Rose !” she cried with a threatening gesture,—“ that is saying much. Ask your

heart whether it would not readily sacrifice my friendship to passion for a lover?—Yet why should you need such sacrifice? I am not so hard as to deny you love, if you were only candid towards me. As to the ring, keep it well, but beware of its falling into strange hands; I should not like to see unbidden guests pressing into my quiet domains.”

The sadness of the lady changed at the end of her speech into partial anger, and I went away less cheerful than on former occasions. I said to myself, “What does she think of me with these singular speeches? Certainly she has found out my love for Martin. I know that I talk at times in my sleep, and she must have overheard me. Fool that I am, not to have told her of it long ago! She is so good, so condescending, she would not have scolded me! But did not my dear mystery hover a thousand times upon my lips, and yet I could never speak it? Away, Rose, with this foolish bashfulness! Consider the lady as your mother, and speak boldly to her. There is no evil in loving and marrying, and besides I cannot and must not

do any thing without her, as she has shown so much kindness to me."

Such was the way in which I conversed with myself upon my return to the upper world, and resolved not to draw down upon me the anger of my friend by any longer silence. It was late on a Saturday night, when I fully made up my mind as to what I should do, and I urged on my spindle more rapidly, that I might finish my task, and not, as it sometimes happened, have to work on a Sunday, and so be hindered in my design.

My cousins, who had got fine clothes, and burned with desire to show them, did not fail to go to church, but I staid at home under the pretext of indisposition, and, as soon as they had turned their backs, hastened to my beloved well, to turn the ring and carry my design into effect. Before, however, I could get there, I suddenly heard myself accosted by a gentle voice,—“ Shall I never find you inclined to listen to me ?”—It was Martin, who stood beside me.

“ For shame !” I exclaimed with glowing

cheeks; "how you frightened me! Go; I cannot talk to you; you see we are alone."

"It is for that very reason I would speak with you. I have so much to say, good Rose, and your spies never leave you for a moment."

I blushed still more, pressed his hand, which had seized mine, and cast to the ground my eyes, that were filled with tears.

He took my silence for consent. We seated ourselves at the edge of the well, and a conversation began which seemed interminable.

"O my benefactress!" I exclaimed with folded hands and a glance at the well, when Martin had finished the confession of his love, and the detail of his plans for our happiness;—"O my benefactress! you hear the oaths of this man! Be you his judge if he ever should break his faith with me! Be you my judge if I ever should break my faith with him!—for I love him more than ever maiden loved a youth!—And now, Martin, farewell; I am going to obtain her consent to our happiness, and per-

haps to-morrow I am yours.—Fool that I was, not to ask the good lady for it before.”

“What are you about?” cried my lover, seeing with terror that I got upon the edge of the well, with the intention of descending into the lower world by the help of the ring. But Martin, who knew nothing of my purpose, embraced me with vehement gestures, nor would he desist till I had again seated myself by him to explain to him the mystery.

My narration lasted long, for I resolved to conceal nothing from him, and his exclamations of joy and wonder, with the thousand questions interposed, made it still longer. I had just ended when I saw my aunt coming over the fields, and now knew that the time for the visit to my benefactress had passed in the conversation with my lover. Another embrace, a few more words of delight at the nearness of our happiness, and then we separated.

My scolding aunt found me, when she came up, unusually red, and bade me go away from the well to my work. Not knowing what else

to say, I asked after Magdalene, and received for answer that she had gone over to the neighbouring village, and would not return before night. This troubled me but little; I worked hard the whole day long, that I might go to bed so much the sooner, and then wake again after midnight to execute my important commission with my protectress.

Soon after I had fallen asleep I was awakened by the voices of my two relations, who were talking together very loudly in the next chamber, and, upon hearing my own name mentioned, I listened more attentively.—“She will wake,” said the mother; “speak softly.”—“Let her wake,” answered Magdalene with her accustomed roughness; “the time is coming when all must be explained. For the rest, you would do well in believing me more for the future, since you see that I am right in all things. We now see that her sudden dexterity was not acquired by fair means, and I have also found out her secret understanding with my Martin. Heavens! what it cost me not to burst forth at once from my hiding-place and strangle the

impudent wretch with my own hands ! But my inoderation was well rewarded ; I now know her whole history—know what I have to do to visit, like her, the old woman in the well, and, like her, become dexterous and beautiful ; for, believe me, the red and white of her cheeks are not natural ; they are a gift from the old witch. Oh, I will go and get from her all that she has done for that idiot—and then Martin shall love me—yes, he shall love me, I assure you—for I will be fairer and better than Rose is, if my project succeeds.”

As she spoke thus Magdalene clapped her hands, and screamed so loudly, that her mother again bade her be silent.

“ Still ! still ! ” she whispered ;—“ I entreat you in Heaven’s name ! You forget that, for our project, we need the ring, which she never puts off from her finger, and which we must try to get away secretly. Oh, I had observed this thing before, but without guessing its value, because it was of lead, or else she would not have worn it so long.”

With terror I heard this conversation with-

out knowing what to do; but, the moment the ring was mentioned, I recollected that my friend had strictly bidden me not to let it fall into other hands. I was here the weaker, and thought that I could not otherwise save it than by letting it drop behind the bed. This I endeavoured to do gently, but its fall rung loudly, as if metal had fallen from a great height into a rocky abyss. I heard the sound for several moments; it bounded twice or thrice, as Magdalene's reel had done before, when I let it fall into the well.

I felt strangely at the sound, as if something within me cried out, "Good night, my true benefactress! the bond between us is for ever broken!"—But I had no time to anatomize my thoughts, for my tormentors, who had probably agreed to lay aside craft and kindness, and proceed by violence, now rushed forward, and, finding me awake, without farther preface, demanded the ring from me. I pretended not to understand their meaning, and it came to an explanation, which, mixed as it was with abuse, and poured forth by two yelling female voices

at the same time, would have been perfectly unintelligible, if I had not been informed of all beforehand.

My hesitation and denial availed me nothing. They laid hands upon me, and used me most cruelly; and, when at last I was forced to confess that the treasure they sought had fallen behind the bed, I was dragged out, and every thing turned topsy-turvy to find it again. They did, indeed, find an old iron ring, which had probably been broken off from some piece of furniture, and would have fitted a giant's finger rather than mine. This, they wanted me to confess, was the one they were looking for, and, without paying any attention to my denial, they dragged me to the well, to teach cousin Magdalene how she was to manage in visiting the subterranean kingdom.

The mother staid with me, regaling me with blows, while her daughter ran to put on her best things, that she might appear properly before the Lady of the Veils. I employed my utmost eloquence to persuade her that it was all over with Magdalene, if, trusting to this

ring, she plunged into the abyss, for I was not wicked enough to wish her to meet with any accident. But my cousin now appeared, leaped upon the edge of the well, without listening to any suggestions, turned the ring, as she had learnt from my talk to Martin, raised the right foot, then the left, and tumbled with a dreadful crash into the abyss, where no hope remained for her but that her clothes might be caught by some projection, and she might thus be saved.

This, probably, was the case, for we heard her whimpering below, and calling out for help in a faint voice. I was the first who hurried off to call Martin and the neighbours, that they might assist in getting her up again, but I was not fortunate enough to be present at her escape; my aunt soon followed me, and locked me up in my room, with the assurance that I should not leave it again until Magdalene had re-appeared, or she had been revenged for Magdalene's death.

After I had tolerably recovered in my solitude,—for every one had gone to the well,—

and made myself a thousand reproaches for the fault which had drawn upon me this misfortune, my first care was to look for the ring, which, to my great joy, had not fallen into the hands of my enemies. I had flung it behind the bed, and could point out with a needle the precise spot whereon it ought to lie—but I sought in vain. Alas! I recollected only too soon the sound of its heavy fall, and I exclaimed, bursting into tears, “O kind Lady of the Veils! you have taken it back again, for I was not worthy of it; but could I act otherwise if I did not wish your gift to become the property of an unworthy creature, who by means of it would have forced herself into your kingdom and disturbed its quiet?”

Worn out with continued weeping, I at length fell asleep on the bare floor, where I was sitting, and a multitude of confused images floated darkly before my fancy. When I awoke I was unable to separate and define them; nothing remained distinctly upon my memory but the image of my benefactress, with her long, thin finger raised up to menace, and the

warning voice, with which she spoke the words, "Candour, secresy, and prudence."—Ah! the dear voice, ever admonishing rightly! I can still fancy that I hear her! she laid before me my errors only too plainly, and told me what I had to do for the future.

I followed her directions, and, recollecting the golden spindle, my only remaining possession, I hastened to look for it, and, when I had found it, sewed the treasure in the lining of my under frock, that no one might rob me of it. But this last gift of my benefactress was secured to me by another circumstance, which is the best security for all treasures,—namely, no one knew that I possessed it. By chance I had forgotten to mention it in my unlucky narrative to Martin, and thus the listening Magdalene had not the slightest suspicion of my riches.

I spent the whole of the following day in solitude, without eating or drinking, and in the most painful disquiet. I heard nothing but the groans of my aunt, and the curses and execrations, which she poured out against me towards

the neighbours who had collected for the purpose of comforting her. Martin too came in for his share, having shown himself careless in the measures taken for Magdalene's preservation. She laid it to him that the unfortunate girl had not been found ; he had besides vehemently urged my release, and, when all he could say was fruitless, had left them with a declaration that he would find the means of righting both himself and me, since, before God and man, I was his bride, whom he would lead to the altar as soon as I was in his hands. —O Martin, what transports did I feel at heart from your zealous ardour ! It was my only consolation, and I seated myself joyfully at the window, to wait the end of my sufferings in the fresh air that breathed upon me through the grating.

It was about the time of evening twilight that I heard from the neighbourhood of the well a hollow moaning, like the sound of Magdalene's voice. I was just rising to call for help through the door, when I saw a figure at a distance, which, I know not why, I took for hers, al-

though it was scarcely human, and, which the nearer it came, grew the more horrible. Face and hands were hardly to be recognised from bruises and swellings; the high head-dress and the long garments were drenched in mud, and drew along a great part of the mire and bushes of the well; her pace was rather a creeping than a walking, and her voice broke out from time to time into fearful shrieks. She would have excited pity, had not rage and malice burnt upon her distorted features, and all her actions betrayed an impotent spirit of revenge. As she passed beneath my window, she held up her hands with furious gestures, and immediately afterwards beat violently at the door; my aunt, who had chanced to see her through the window, would no doubt have opened to her directly, but the fearful apparition had so terrified her, she could not in her hurry find the key, so that for a long time Magdalene served as a laughing-stock for the passers-by. No doubt, however, her greatest vexation was, that Martin, who happened to come that way, could not forbear approaching her to be con-

vinced of what he saw, and then hurried off with every token of abhorrence.

Magdalene was now admitted, and I crept to the door to learn from her conversation what had brought her into this miserable condition; but her discourse was a howl, and it was not till after many hours, when she had been cleansed and put to bed, that I learnt what had happened, less from her mouth than from her mother's discourse with her neighbours.

I caught fragments only, and as I have never, since that time, asked her any questions on the subject, I can give you nothing more than a broken narrative. She had reached the bottom of the well, covered with wounds and swellings, and with her dress in the most miserable plight. From the insensibility,—which I too had twice experienced,—she recovered in the same country, and went through the same adventures that I had done, but acted in a manner quite consonant with her usual character. She trod down the fruit and flowers, plundered the kitchen and cellars, and replied with rudeness and

falsehood to the Lady of the Veils, who received her with ironical politeness. My friend had her own peculiar way of taming her enemies; she called up half a dozen of her subordinate spirits,—with the sight of whom she had never alarmed me,—the black brood of lasting night! images which few mortal eyes could see without dying with terror!—and these she ordered to try their arts upon the unruly Magdalene.

Magdalene did not, indeed, die, but before evening she grew quite tractable, and crept imploringly to the feet of the indignant lady, from whom she obtained her pardon. Her gratitude for this was shown by getting up in the night, stealing the gold and silver implements from the dressing-table, and secretly flying, not forgetting to carry off the silver bowl from the fountain. A hundred spirits were bound to the enchanted vessel, who would not suffer their treasure to be taken from them; the whole shadowy kingdom was awake behind her; they fell upon the poor wretch to torment her, as only spirits can torment a mortal, and at last hurled her from one point to another up

the well, on the brink of which she lay senseless for hours, without being sought or found by any one, till at length she revived, and crept back, howling, to her mother's cottage.

However little Magdalene had deserved my pity, yet the description of what she had suffered moved me to tears ; nothing consoled me but her mother's opinion that the greatest part of these frightful adventures had been only a dream, or pure fancy, and that she had in reality suffered nothing more than the contusions from her tumble into the well. Magdalene, however, found little comfort in this interpretation of her story ; she did not like to be robbed of the honour of having been actually ill-treated, and, from her bed, roared out repeated asseverations of the truth of what she had uttered.

" It is true ! " she cried, " it is all true ! and, if you won't believe me, feel in my pockets. Of all my booty, at least the old witch's comb and brush have remained ; they are of gold ; and will make my dowry so considerable, that Martin must take me."

No sooner had the mother heard of golden

treasures than she ran to her daughter's clothes to get them, when two hideous toads leaped out upon her, and, fastening themselves upon her neck, would have killed her, if one of the neighbours had not had courage enough to tear them off and fling them into the fire.

This scene ended with execrations and threats against me, who was looked upon as the occasion of this misfortune. I thought I should die of fear, and exclaimed, wringing my hands, "Good God! what will become of me, if I remain in the power of these furies?"—But at this moment the voice of my lover sounded through the grating,—“Come, my beloved, let us fly; the hour of your deliverance has struck.”—I flew to the window, and, by the pale moonlight, saw Martin upon a ladder, armed with tools to break the iron bars of my prison. The increasing noise in my cousin's chamber overpowered the noise of our flight. Martin received me in his arms, and, before the next day was over, the priest's hand had made me his wife.

The persecutions of my enemies were now

fruitless, for the officer, with whom Martin served, took us under his protection. In a short time too I should be entirely free from the danger of their malice, for, after a few days, the army was to break up from my birthplace for a distant country.

Oh ! I was happy in the arms of my husband, and nothing grieved me but that I should be for ever separated from my benefactress. I heeded not the loss of my ring, and went one night to the well with intent to plunge into it, let the consequence be what it might, and once again see my injured friend ; but, alas ! the well was filled up ! My story and that of Magdalene had excited general attention ; every one passed with terror the spot that was so dear to me, and the magistrates, if they would not have the country quite depopulated, saw themselves compelled to block up the passage with stones and rubbish, both against mortals and immortals. I wept over this destruction till the rising of the sun, and invoked my benefactress by her most hateful as well as her dearest names, that I might see her again, even if it

were in anger ; I rubbed, too, and pressed her last gift in a thousand ways, to awake any secret power it might have, but all in vain. My husband found me bathed in tears on the spot, which was so dangerous to me from the vicinity of my persecutors, and, with some anger, led me home, whence in a few days we began our march to the country where you now find me.

From the profits of his occupation Martin bought this little property, and left me here when he went to the wars, consoling me with the hope of peace and of his return. I employed, however, my first quiet hours in setting my golden spindle in motion, which I vowed to preserve till death as a memorial of my benefactress.

It was with good reason that she had told me this gift would make me rich, for it was incredible how much I could accomplish with it. In three hours I did as much as could be done in a day with any other, and,—what was the strangest part of the story,—when I left it over-night hanging at the rock, with scarcely a single thread upon it, I found it in the morning

full and heavy with a yarn so fine, that even my fingers, skilful as they were by the lady's kindness, could not spin any thing like it, and which I sold at court as dear as gold.

I never saw this wonder without heartfelt gratitude towards the occasion of it; but a greater delight was reserved for me; one sleepless night,—and the absence and peril of my husband caused me many,—as I raised my eyes to the rock, which stood at the window in the clear moonlight, I saw the Lady of the Veils spinning at it with great earnestness. I uttered a loud cry of joy, and, calling her by name, rushed out of bed, to throw myself at her feet, but, as I came near to her, the beloved spirit melted into air, and I held nothing but the spindle, that was only half filled.

In the following nights, notwithstanding this disappointment, I endeavoured to see my benefactress again, and embrace her knees; in the first I always succeeded; in the latter, never. Sometimes her looks seemed to rest upon me in the distance kindly and smilingly, but she still remained intangible to my arms, and made

no reply to my lamentations. In the meantime my wealth increased by her aid, but I kept it a secret, that I might surprise my husband with it on his return. In truth I lived happily in this quiet middle rank of life, and rejoiced in my treasures solely upon his account. Still I did not let them lie quite idle. Benevolence towards the poor, and hospitality, were two of the most agreeable lessons I had learnt at the Lady's spinning-wheel, and her instructions were with me much too sacred to be neglected. My treasures streamed forth in silence upon the needy, and many an eye was brightened by me that yet did not know me.

That I might be able to attend to the duties of hospitality, as well as those of quiet benevolence, I bought the little cottage, about twenty paces from the village, where our wicked neighbour lives now, and in this I received the sick and the weary,—a holy occupation, for the practice of which the continuing war afforded me a thousand opportunities. A battle was fought in these parts, and my house was full of the wounded, who sought their cure with me;

and of the dying, who wished to breathe their last in quiet. I could tell you many instances of this kind, but hear only one, the most essential.

A young man, upon whom I had bestowed every care and attention, yet fell a victim to death, and before his end commended his wife to me, pointing out the place where I should find her sick and nearly dying.—“She has not,” he said, “deserved this care at my hands; she almost forced herself upon me, and during our short marriage has been a torment to me, but she is a helpless stranger, and I must not leave her entirely without comfort; she came over with me from distant Germany to find a grave here. Take her to you, and let her die in your arms; perhaps your intercession may open to her the gates of heaven, which her own sins have closed against her.”

The young warrior died, and I delayed not to fulfil his last wishes. The wretched creature, who was brought into my house, was to me an object of real pity, but she never could be an object of love and good-will, for her appear-

ance was as hateful as her conduct. Her face, covered with scars, was an image of her impure soul. In her illness, scorn and furious impatience against me, who nursed her, were poured out alternately with feeble lamentations and creeping humility; a cold shudder thrilled through me, whenever I saw her, and great was my joy when her recovery allowed me to remove so unpleasant a patient from my cottage.

I procured for her a little habitation in the village, and gave her work, for which I paid her double, for she, like myself, was a spinner. Unfortunately our common occupation gave her many opportunities of tormenting me with her presence, which became to me the more intolerable the more I thought I discovered something familiar in her voice and features; I, therefore, gave her a small sum, that she might begin for herself, and do without me, but still she would creep after me every day as I sate at work, peep into every corner of my house, criticise every thing, and find fault with my domestic arrangements. A trifling sickness, that attacked her one day, when with me, gave her

an excuse for passing the night in my cottage, and I had reason to suspect that it was more curiosity than illness that detained her with me for many days.

I did not conceal my thoughts from her, and she left me with murmurs and menaces.—“There are people,” she said, “who drive good luck out of their houses, and upon whose heels misfortune follows close in consequence.” I paid no attention to her raven cry, for I did not reflect that the wicked have the fulfilment of their prophecies in their own hands.

A few days only had passed, when the wishes of my enemy were gratified; a fire destroyed my house at the entrance of the village, together with my stores. All the treasures, that I had collected for myself, my husband, and the poor, were irretrievably lost, and I saved nothing from the flames but my spindle.

In my distress no one appeared more ready to assist me than my enemy, and, deprived as I was of all other support, I was compelled to accept the refuge which she offered me in her cottage. To add to my misfortune, on the

third day of my abode with her she brought me the news that my Martin had been made prisoner, and that, according to the custom of the time, he, with others who had fallen into the hands of the enemy, would be killed, unless some one was found to pay the ransom set upon him. The sum demanded was exorbitant; even with the secret help of my benefactress, I must have spun for months to get together so much money, and his deliverance must take place in a few days at the farthest.

I was in despair; no expedient occurred to me but one, at which I recoiled, and yet which I was forced to adopt at last, because it was the only one. I set out, sold my golden spindle, swept up the money with tears, and flew to the camp to ransom my husband.—“ Ah, love !” I cried on the road, wringing my hands,—“ Ah, love ! love ! what a sacrifice have I made to you ! Now the bonds of union between me and my old friend are for ever sundered !—The loss of the ring only robbed me of all intercourse with her ; but the loss of the spindle deprives

me of her sight too, of her care, of her blessing. What did she say at our last parting? Take good care of it, for, in losing it, you lose every claim to my good-will and protection."

Such were my lamentations; but the sight of Martin, who was waiting for me, and my joy at having saved him, never again to part from him, soon chased away all melancholy thoughts. He agreed to follow me to the country, where the ruins of our house lay, and I engaged to gain so much by my industry in a short time, as to be able to make it habitable. Alas! I did not consider what I was saying! My connexion with her, who so supernaturally blessed my exertions, was broken up; henceforth I was nothing more than a common spinner, and consequently the profits of my labour were hardly sufficient to support us. Still could I seriously think that my benefactress would be angry at an unavoidable act, springing out of duty to my husband? I had not sacrificed her gift from petulance or levity, and in truth she was kind enough to restore it; a short time only and the

golden spindle again hung at my rock, and I saw the dear spinner sitting by it at night, and finishing my task for me.

My joy and gratitude were inexpressible, and the hope of advancement certain. Our house again rose from its ashes, our fields no longer lay waste, and Martin himself ploughed the land, or brought its rich produce into our new-built barns.

We were fortunate by our mutual industry, and nothing vexed me but that for some time Martin's eyes had not dwelt upon me with the same affection as formerly. Still I comforted myself by saying, "He is no longer your lover but your husband; besides, you are not the same blooming Rose, nor he the same youth, as when he swore eternal love by the well. The toils of the war, and the labours of domestic life, have deprived him of his cheerfulness; he feels for you as formerly, but he cannot show it in the manner that once used to captivate you."

At last, however, his coldness betrayed not only a diminution of love but of confidence.

From the very commencement of our reunion I had hesitated to discover to him the mystery of the spindle and the inexhaustible source of our wealth ; and now that Martin no longer cast upon me those looks, which had been wont to draw every secret from my inmost soul, now it was so much the easier for me to keep my little mysteries to myself.—“ Silence,—silence,”—thought I,—“is the best guardian of my treasure. My mysterious friend will love me so much the more for my not communicating to any one what has passed between us. Alas ! I practised this wise rule in the wrong place, and soon found that the reserve, exhibited in almost all my actions, had only more estranged my husband. Martin began to be absent from me for days together, and what most vexed me was, that the time, thus robbed from me, was spent in the house of my odious neighbour. With her ugliness jealousy was out of the question, but the suspicion of her poisoning his mind against me was only too well founded. The bitter reproaches with which he now began to attack me, and the hateful colouring he gave

to my conduct during the time of his absence in the wars, all showed me that I had not without reason dreaded the whispers of this venomous adder. My care of the poor man and the pilgrim was extravagance and a cover for secret excesses; my wealth was ill-gotten property; and my continued connexion with my benefactress was no better than witchcraft and intercourse with evil spirits. At the last accusation I thought I should have sunk into the ground, and asked with trembling what he could know of such things.

“Rather let me ask, why you conceal such things from your husband?” he replied. “At the time when you were yet young and innocent, you hid nothing from me, and I was too inexperienced, too much blinded by love, to find a crime in any thing you did. Now you are a wretched hypocrite, and I am sufficiently aware of my duty to give you the choice of two things,—either eternal separation from me, or from the abominable spectre that sits at your rock every night, and tears the flax with her claw-like fingers.”

“ Martin, do you slander the benefactress, who has made me yours, who has blessed our labours, and saved you from death?”

“ I curse my alliance with a witch!—curse the gain that has been made by prohibited arts!—curse even my life, since you bought it by the sacrifice of the instrument of your sins, the magic spindle!—Oh, if I could once find it, I would hurl it into the deepest abyss, and fling myself after it.”

“ Martin! you are mad! Why do you talk of things which you have not heard from my lips, and which, therefore, may be false?”

“ Oh, there are kind folks, who have opened my eyes—folks, who have seen and heard, and have made me see and hear, till my senses well nigh failed me.”

This fearful dialogue was the prelude to an explanation, which showed me I had to thank my wicked neighbour for all my misery; she had by degrees spied out all my mysteries, and had imparted them to my husband in a way the best calculated to raise in his fiery soul the storm which now burst over me. I wept bit-

terly; anger at the furious conduct of Martin was subdued by the most lively compassion for his unhappy error, an error which made him so wretched, and which I in vain endeavoured to dissipate. The image of his former love and of his present wrath stood in dreadful contrast with each other, and I exclaimed, "O lady, what do all your benefits avail me, if I am to purchase them so dearly? Take back your gifts, take back your blessing, but restore me the same Martin, who swore eternal love to me by the side of your well."

Martin stood with folded arms, and eyes fixed steadily upon me, as if waiting for my decision.

"Are you decided in offering me such a choice?" I asked, drying my eyes.

"Yes, Rose; duty, religion, and even love, command it."

"Love to me!" I cried, and, springing up, I loosened the dear spindle from the rock—"Oh, if you still love me, take all,—take all,—but be wholly mine again. Take your own supporter, the saviour of your life! Take the confidential

bond, that linked me to one of the most blessed of the heavenly spirits! I willingly sacrifice it, if in so doing I can only gain your heart."

Martin took the treasure, gazed on it for a few minutes, then on me, then pressed me to his heart, and hurled the unlucky cause of our dissension through the window into the river below, which swallowed it in an instant.

With the loss of my spindle had vanished the fountain of all our prosperity; our wealth no longer increased, and that we possessed soon disappeared. We were poor peasants, like our neighbours; my spindle was filled only with the common yarn, laboriously procured and badly paid, and the earth was iron under my husband's plough, and now gave only a simple return, where before it had yielded tenfold. But do you think this disturbed me? No; my mind had never hankered after riches; that which gnawed at my heart was the eternal separation from my benefactress, whom I no longer saw in bright nights turning round my spindle, and smiling on me with affection. But this was made up to me by the perfect love of

my husband, who was now quite reconciled to me, and grew again the same as when I had first known him. I succeeded in convincing him of the injustice he had done me, and in making the disturber of our peace suspicious to him. Nothing more effectually contributed to his dislike of our evil neighbour than the idea, which we gradually came to, of her being the same abandoned Magdalene, who from the first had viewed our happiness with envious eyes, and had not rested till she had destroyed a part of it, though, Heaven be praised, not the better part. Eventually her own confession confirmed our belief, in which she put on the appearance of a repentant sinner, and under that character kept the door of our house open to her. Still we disliked her society, and tolerated it only from compassion, while she was trying partly to palliate, and partly to deny the plots, of which she stood convicted. In nothing was she more eloquent than in defending her hatred of the lady of the well;—"Could I," she would say, "see my enemy, the companion of my friends?—she who punished

my youthful presumption so cruelly?—she who robbed me of my beauty, and covered my face with scars, that prevented even you from recognising me? Thank Heaven, my friends, that I have freed you from this monster, who sooner or later would have shown you her claws, and destroyed you."

To such language I was silent; my husband too said nothing, but I believe that he suffered more than I did in his heart. I had resigned myself to my fate, while he, who with time had come to sounder thoughts, and had reason to look upon himself as the destroyer of our prosperity, grieved in silence, pined away, and—died.

I was now a poor, helpless, deserted widow, and began for the first time to find what I had lost in my separation from my old friend, who assuredly would not have left me uncomf^{ort}ed in my affliction. But I had in a certain measure given up her connexion voluntarily, and did not deserve that she should give herself any more trouble about me. Still she did not abandon me; her kind hand was not to be

mistaken, and I should even now be enjoying the fruits of her benevolence, if my enemy had not always contrived to rob me of more than half the benefit of it.

In the course of time age and tears had weakened my eyesight, my earnings were scanty, and want and poverty stood close at my door. I thought of selling my goat, which till now had supported me with her milk, that, if I could once get any money into my hands, I might try to do something better for myself. With this view I went into the field to get her some food for the last time, when a shepherd, whom I had never seen before, passed by with his flock, at the moment when I was weeping bitterly at the idea of the approaching separation from my poor goat.—“Why are you weeping, mother?” said he; and I did not hesitate to tell him the cause of my lamentation.

“Nonsense!” replied the shepherd; “do as I do; singing, I drive my flock out; singing, I drive it home again, and all my work prospers.”

“Alas! I too did my work with song and

with cheerfulness; but now I wet my spindle with tears."

"Are you a spinster? I too,—Heaven be praised for it,—can spin, but I do not wet my spindle with tears, and, therefore, I thrive in my occupation. Take this wonderful ball of my own spinning; I give it you; perhaps it may bring you profit, as it has been spun amidst mirth and laughter."

I looked at the speaker, a stout young man, and took his ball, which he offered me with a smile, saying, "Wind off as much as you please from it; your fortune will last as long as the thread, but do not go exactly to the heart from which it springs."

These were mysterious words, the explanation of which I would fain have heard from him, but just then my collection of grass fell out of my apron, and, when I had gathered it together and got up, sheep and shepherd were all gone.

I hastened home, gave the fodder to my goat, and began, with the expectation of some wonder, to wind a thread from my ball, such as

no shepherd is like to spin. I wound and wound this and the following days so much from the ball, that I was no longer under the necessity of selling my goat. My yarn-magazine was inexhaustible, and my fortunes again began to flourish. I paid strict attention to the donor's warning, was cheerful over my easy labour, and thanked God for the blessing that followed all I did; I was soon the same woman of substance that I had formerly been; the pilgrim and the poor man again found a mother in me, and even Magdalene shared in my prosperity.

One evening, as I sate in my chamber, and by moonlight was drawing out a whole host of threads from the inexhaustible ball, I heard Magdalene's voice behind me on a sudden, exclaiming,—“ All things considered, neighbour, there must be something singular in this ball of yours, and I would lay a wager that the golden spindle makes the heart of it; only dig with the needle into it, and you will see if I am right or not.”—I started up full of terror. From no one had I so anxiously concealed my mystery

as from my unworthy cousin, and now I found myself so completely watched by her. I drove her away with violence and reproach, and closed the door, as indeed I thought I had done before her appearance, but I could not drive her words out of my memory. "Is it possible," thought I to myself, "that the devil can for once speak truth?—It is beyond doubt that the source of my fortune is the gift of my old friend; how if within this endless ball the dear spindle lies concealed, and by means of this she would renew the bond between us?"

This idea haunted me incessantly; at last I got up one night after having dreamt that my fancy was real, and between waking and sleeping dug with a needle into the heart of my ball, till the end, which came from it, broke, and no skill of mine could find it again.

I now began to wind it off from without, and saw that in this way I should soon come to the end of my wealth, for the ball waxed thinner and thinner, till at last I got to the core, which, instead of being the treasure I sought, was only a pebble.

He, who had suffered so much as I have, could not be utterly inconsolable at any blow from fate, and I saw the ruin of my fortune with a sort of melancholy calmness ; but my most painful feelings were indignant scorn of my own folly and increasing hatred towards my tempter. Still I could scarcely be angry with her ; this time it might be that she had spoken only from the impulse of chance, and not from any evil intention, so that I alone might be to blame.

I had found, and lost, too much good fortune in the world to expect any thing more in my old days ; I, therefore, collected the fruits of my yarn-adventure, which now had ceased on the sudden, and husbanded it so that I might hope to gain a tolerable subsistence from it till my death. The spindle and the weaver's spool continued to be my darling implements, and I kept them constantly in motion, till I met with a second adventure, which convinced me I was under the protection of a higher power, and which filled my heart with the peace and cheerfulness that you now see in me, and that I am so anxious to transfer to you.

I was sitting one evening, as usual, at the door of my cottage, looking out into the twilight to see if I could find any poor traveller to share in my humble repast, when a man appeared before me in the dress of a pilgrim from the holy sepulchre; the reverend garb, however, could scarcely be recognised, so much was it decayed by the long journey. The snow of age covered his head, and his trembling limbs were supported by a knotty stick. I stood up before him respectfully, and invited him into my cottage, when I treated him as I treated you on your first appearance,—that is, I refreshed him with bread and milk, gave him water to wash his feet, and made up a bed for him. But I could scarcely sleep for thinking of him, so much was I moved by the sight of his misery. I reflected upon the means of helping him, but found myself too unprovided to do it thoroughly, and I had already in vain solicited him to make a longer stay in my cottage, for he had vowed, he said, to be a pilgrim till the day of his death. On a sudden his wretched dress struck me; it was, indeed, but

an indifferent defence against the rain and cold, and I rose hastily to supply the want while he was yet sleeping. Having completed my preparations, I packed up the clothes in a bundle, together with half the money I then possessed, and laid the whole by his bedside.

Soon afterwards he awoke, took up his staff and bundle, and went away without any particular expression of gratitude; only at the door he turned round to me, and accompanied the action with such strange words, that they seemed rather a curse than a blessing, and at all events I did not know what to make of them.

“Let him mutter what he will,” said I to myself as I returned to my room; “I did what I could for him, for the sake of heaven, and not to gain his praise or blessing.”

The haste, with which I had driven on my nightly labour, was the cause of my work still lying in disorder upon the table. I took up the remnant of linen from the piece I had used for the old man, and began to measure it, not well knowing what to do with such a fragment; but the cloth seemed to extend under the rod;

there was no end to the measuring. Behind me appeared the end of the linen, and yet before me was a mountain of the finest material, so high that I could not see over it. My breath failed me, I ceased to count, and would have willingly rested, but an invisible power compelled me to go on measuring and augmenting my wealth. The hours fled; already by mid-day I stood in the midst of a mountain of snow-white linen, and by evening my wealth would probably have half stifled me, if on a sudden Magdalene's voice had not sounded at the open door.—“Heaven help us!” she cried; “what are you doing? I have looked on at this work for an hour already; is the measuring to have no end to-day?”

I looked back in terror. The end of the linen slipped from my hand, and I measured the last ell, sinking back upon my seat, and gasping for air.

“Thanks, my dear neighbour,” I cried,—“thanks for your having interrupted me. Oh, the bounty of Heaven is too excessive, and I am almost sinking beneath the weight of it.”

Magdalene fancied that, in such a case, she would not say it was excessive, and asked after the source of this strange blessing. Joy had opened my heart; I told her all, and dismissed her with rich presents.

I now began to reflect upon the last words of my guest, which darkly hinted a wish that I might not end before night the first work I should take up in the morning. This wish would probably have been fulfilled if the eternal disturber of my fortune had not forced herself upon me, and she was too disagreeable to the powers that befriended me, for them to continue any longer the spectacle of their benevolence.

The more I thought upon the subject, the more I regretted my frank narration to the enemy of my invisible benefactress. Oh, if I had but kept to myself a part only of the secret upon which my wicked neighbour formed the plan for my destruction!

I had mentioned to her that my guest promised to return in a year and a day; this was enough to make her strive after the possession

of my house, which stood by the road, and consequently could not be missed by the benevolent saint upon his return. She thought, if she could drive me out, and settle herself in my house, she would succeed in attracting him to her, and, by giving him a much more splendid reception than he had found with me, obtain a still more striking wonder to her advantage.

It was easy for her to effect what she wished, for she had long ceased to be the needy person whom I had known in the commencement of our acquaintance. Want and idleness are the mother of the strangest projects. Magdalene unwillingly occupied herself with the spindle, for she felt concealed talents in herself, that would support her still better. A portion of the year she employed in wandering about the country and telling fortunes, and the strange sort of ugliness, which she possessed, gave her the appearance of that she wished to represent. She had, besides, profound cunning, perfect knowledge of the human heart, skill in sounding those who came to be instructed by her, and some

experience; these ingredients made her that she was,—namely, the oracle of the surrounding country. People came from miles off to ask her advice, and rewarded her counsels splendidly. In her travels she had even gone as far as the court, where, if her boasts might be trusted, she was received by the queen herself with approbation and presents. Nor does this seem to me improbable; people of Geneva's sort are inclined to every species of folly, and have always a particular curiosity about futurity, which they seek to satisfy at any price. It is possible too that the snares, laid by Morgana for the queen, might be so multiplied, that supernatural wisdom was requisite for their prevention. Little, however, can be said upon such subjects; and, therefore, let me go on with my story.

With such means, and, above all, with such friends, as Magdalene possessed, it was an easy thing for her to get from me the house in which I had spent the happiest days of my life, and entertained angels.

As I was now a trader in linen, and in good

circumstances, I could manage to oppose her claims for a time, but eventually I lost my cause, built this cot from the shipwreck of my fortune, limited my expenses, and commenced the life which you now see me leading. I was, indeed, well contented to be no longer plagued by the importunities of Magdalene, who,—God knows why,—has begun again to show her face here since you have been with me.

In the meantime the year drew to a close, and with every day I might look for the return of my benefactor. Alas! it was only to express my gratitude, that I wished to see him yet once again, though my neighbour made preparations for his appearance with very different motives.

He came on the day appointed, entered her cottage without asking after me, his old hostess, was splendidly entertained by her, and dismissed in the morning with ostentatious presents. He left her with the same blessing with which he had before left me, while Magdalene would scarcely allow him to finish it, so much did she burn with desire to hasten to her chamber, that

she might begin the work which she had proposed to herself, and which she did not wish to end before the evening. A short time previous, Guenevra's generosity,—Heaven knows wherefore,—had supplied her with a quantity of gold pieces, and these now lay ready to be indefinitely augmented by counting and turning over. She was already on the point of crossing the sill, and commencing the profitable labour, when she saw that a great spider had been busy, while she let out the pilgrim, spinning his web between the door-posts, as if to prevent her ingress. She raised her hand to sweep the impotent obstacle out of the way, but no sooner was the odious door-keeper killed, and his web destroyed, than another appeared in his place, far surpassing his predecessor in size and loathsomeness. This too was killed, when, lo! from the fragments of his crushed body twenty other spiders arose, and more and more webs thickened amidst the broken threads, till all was life and motion with the eight-legged monsters, and the light was darkened by their nets. Her hand was incessantly raised to destroy, and yet her disgust-

ing task was no nearer to its end. Then she thought on the blessing, or rather curse, uttered by the pilgrim, which she had forced from him by prayers and presents. She cursed her hard fortune, exclaiming, "I shall die! I shall die! the breath of these monsters will stifle me!—Help, help! neighbour Rose! come in and save me! Remember that I saved you when you were on the point of being smothered under the burthen of your wealth."

It so happened that I was just then passing her window. I had gone out to meet the beneficent pilgrim, and had actually seen him, but his frowning looks stifled the thanks that were upon my tongue. His eye seemed to say, "Go, chatterer; your folly has lost you my friendship; now, go, and learn to be content with little." Alas! I had only too well seen through the whole year, that a sort of curse followed me even in the midst of all the advantages derived from his benevolence. Had I been wiser, I might have had more. I was content, however; but it is always melancholy to think that you have yourself trifled away the half of your prosperity.

Amidst such reflections I had lingered for several hours in the fields, and was now passing Magdalene's house in the way to my own, when I heard her voice, calling on me for help. Accordingly I entered, when my appearance as quickly ended her distress, as her appearance before had checked the growth of my fortune. A quantity of boiling water from the kettle on the fire destroyed the last of the disgusting insects, that had crept out from all corners for her torment, and I raised her up without inquiring any farther into the matter; appearances and a few broken words from her told me nearly all, and I had no inclination to enter into long discourses with her. Alas, Genelas, you have not been so prudent; I guessed yesterday, when she stole to you during my absence, that you had let her partially worm out of you the story of your adventures at the king's court; I know the way she has of winning from every one his dearest secrets, and I have told you my history to show you who it is that would gain your confidence, and how you have to guard against her.

"In truth," answered Genelas, "I know not how I came to give even the show of satisfaction to her pressing questions; I hate her heartily; the mere sight of her must needs excite distrust and abhorrence; but you are well aware of her art; she seems to know already every thing she is asking about, and thus learns all that she desires."

"It is precisely therefore that I warn you," replied the old woman; "and to save your frank inexperience from this unequal war with cunning, I will lock you up for the future, when I go to the city to sell our work."

Genelas consented to be a prisoner once every week, and would laugh in her sleeve, when at such times her neighbour came pulling at the door-latch and tapping at the window. What, however, was her surprise one day when she thought herself secure against all intrusion, and fancied nothing was near her except the social little mouse, who here lived on the most friendly footing with the house-cat,—what was her surprise on hearing steps in the fore-court, and, directly after, seeing the door open and a per-

son enter, who was only too well known to her ! She started up from her seat in terror, exclaiming, " Heavens ! the Princess Morgana ! "

" Yes," said the visitor ; " I am Morgana. I have sought you out, that I may snatch you from the misery in which you are living, and revenge you on your enemies."

" Gracious lady, I know nothing of misery, and desire no revenge."

" Genelas, you distrust me ; you mistake me, because I abandoned you to the exile and wretchedness, which fell upon you on my account only. But know that I also was mistaken, and considered you as conspiring with my enemies ; hence my indifference to your fortunes. But an error cannot long exist with me ; I now know the whole truth of the matter, and am come to be your friend. What can you see in a gloomy hut and the society of a cross old woman ? The spinning-wheel is no employment for these hands ; come with me ; far other recreations await you. No pleasure, no happiness, shall be wanting to you in my court, in requital of what you have suffered for me ;

even the society of Carados shall not long be wanting; from the remotest corner of the earth, whither he has been driven by despair, I will recall him to make you happy."

Genelas blushed; the name of the beloved Carados raised a strange tumult in her innocent heart, but her better self quickly regained the ascendant. She was silent, hesitated, and finally stammered a few words, which Morgana could only consider as a refusal.

"It is well," she said; "you may bethink yourself; I take what you say as spoken without reflection, and will again come to repeat my offer. I hear approaching footsteps, and depart; it is only in the hour of solitude that you will see me."

Soon after the kind-hearted hostess of the young maiden really entered, but Genelas said nothing of the temptations she had endured in solitude, nothing of the consent of her own heart to Morgana's projects, and which she had with difficulty subdued. But at last the temptations grew stronger; Morgana brought with her Carados, who flung himself at her feet, and

with the voice of love entreated her not to reject the offers of their protectress, and this time nothing saved her from yielding to the dangerous prayer but the unexpected arrival of Rose, which made the whole vision disappear. She now broke her silence.

“Mother, I must request you not to lock me up for the future, when you go to the city. Let Magdalene steal upon me in your absence; her company is not so dangerous as this solitude.”

A full relation of the past followed this introduction, and after a thoughtful silence Rose replied :

“My child, you have done well in not entering into any league with the vicious Morgana. The slightest intercourse with her would fix a stain upon your good name, and confirm all the slanders against you at court. As to the Carados that she has presented to you, and your denial of his pressing suit, do not give yourself the least trouble ; Morgana is a mighty juggler, who can present any image she pleases, and, beyond doubt, your lover was nothing

more than one of those shadows, with which she is accustomed to deceive every one. Her present abode is on an island near the Sicilian coast, where she constantly mocks the passing mariners with her juggleries. In the mist, which perpetually rests upon her domain, the inexperienced seaman fancies, when afar off, that he sees castles, cities, men, and strange forms of animals; but, when curiosity or necessity brings him closer, he finds himself deceived, and only meets with a poisonous blue vapour, from which he is not unfrequently greeted with malicious laughter, for Morgana's island is inhabited by none except Morgana and her court, and is visible to no human eye but from a distance."

The prudent old woman said much more of the deceitful arts of the enchantress, and by her conversation so confirmed Genelas in her resolution of giving no ear to Morgana, that henceforth all these appearances made not the slightest impression upon her. In her hours of solitude she was always busily employed, and scarcely lifted up her eyes, when Morgana

raised her magic visions, till at length they ceased altogether, and she began to breathe freely again.

But one day, upon Rose's return from the city, her young friend met her with exclamations of delight—"O mother! all our cares from want of work and bad payment are over now. I have again had a visit with locked doors; this time, however, it was no deceitful shadow, but one that incited me to good. See this provision for my spindle; he who brought it was a man resembling your pilgrim, and promised that I should never want materials for my industry till my fortunes changed, and said that with my spindle I laid the foundation of my prosperity."

Rose went to the table at which she and her friend used to work, and saw piled up a great heap of red and purple wool; she shook her head, and with a thoughtful mien pronounced the name of Morgana; but when Genelas described the form and manner of the stranger, and when, upon reckoning, she found it was precisely the time of year that the pilgrim paid his

visits, she became at once contented, thanked God for this new blessing, bade her young friend be industrious, and leave the rest to Heaven.

The spindles were quickly filled with a web, which might shame the threads of Arachne in fineness, and the rainbow in brilliance of colour. The mysterious donor came regularly once a week in Rose's absence to fetch what was spun, and never forgot to say, "Spin, maiden, the stuff for your garment of honour; spin, maiden, spin the threads of your fortune."—But now, when he took away the last of the spinning, and brought no fresh materials with him, terror and sadness fell upon the poor Welsh maiden, and she exclaimed to Rose, "Ah, mother, some change of fortune is at hand with me, since the materials for spinning fail me; and what change can it be that will not snatch me from your arms, and how can I be happy without you?"—Rose endeavoured to comfort her, but tears stood in her own eyes at the thought of being separated from the child of her heart.

At length that, which she had feared from

the pilgrim's prophecy, really happened. A message came from the queen, summoning Genelas to court, and she was obliged to obey.—“ Ah !” she exclaimed, folding her kind mother in her arms for the last time, “ must I then exchange your society for the motley crowds of folly ?—give up my dear spinning-wheel for the business of idleness and luxury, and the peaceful silence of this hut for the persecutions that await me at court ?”

Such were the lamentations of Genelas, and she would have found still more reason for complaint had she known the real cause of her recall to court.

Great ladies have ever in the execution of their secret affairs made use of very subordinate agents, who, in recompense, possess much influence with them, and can speak many a word to the advantage or disadvantage of their friends or enemies. Such was the relationship, as we have already mentioned, between the queen and Magdalene; the latter, therefore, who grudged Rose any pleasure, even the company of Genelas, needed nothing else to remove her

than to give the queen a hint of Morgana's visits, and these she had learnt with her usual curiosity, by listening at the window to the conversation of the two spinners.

Guenевра could not bear the idea of an alliance between Morgana and the young Welsh maiden; she hated both, and had an indefinite fear of mischief to herself if they should make common cause together. To prevent this, an order from the cabinet was hastily issued, and Genelas was obliged to submit to the journey, which gave her so much pain. As she followed the royal envoy, Rose stood at the door and wept; Magdalene, too, stood before her cottage, and bade farewell to the traveller, but the tone of the farewell betrayed the heart which uttered it.

Genelas arrived at court, and did not even enjoy the favour of being presented to the queen, but was immediately set about menial offices, which were hardly suited to a servant of the wardrobe. For her part she could not conceive why they had torn her from her beloved solitude, when they seemed so little to need or

value her. She must indeed have seen that her presence was required only for the sake of watching her more closely, could it have occurred to innocence that it was worth while to set a guard over it; but she had soon occasion to imagine another cause for her not being allowed to repose any longer in the quiet of obscurity. The hero, Carados, had come back again to court after many victories to receive his reward from the hands of King Arthur, and it was strongly reported, that, in lieu of all other recompense, he would demand the hand of one of the queen's maids of honour.

“Ah!” sighed Genelas, “that is the reason of my being called hither. All these women hate me, as is evident from their haughty, scornful glances whenever they pass by me; they know that Carados loved me before the loss of my good name made me unworthy of him, and now they want to triumph over me, to make me the witness of a blessing, which, in truth, belongs only to her, whose virtue no one can question.

Whitsuntide was approaching, when the king

was always wont to hold open court, and this time it was to be kept with more than usual splendour, as, owing to Arthur's indisposition, the preceding Christmas had been neglected : for you must not imagine that the court of the old monarch was like the courts of our days, when every morning brings with it a fresh scene of pleasure. No ; it was three, or, at most, four times a year, on high festivals, that the monarchs of the olden days unveiled the splendour of their courts ; the rest of the year they led a happy private life amidst their family and their household in the retirement of their castles. At these times of quiet, if war did not call upon them, the men occupied themselves with state affairs, and the chase, while the ladies, even such as Queen Guenevra, found themselves obliged to have recourse to the needle and the spinning-wheel, if they would not die of mere ennui.

It may be imagined with what eagerness the lovers of pleasure, after so long an abstinence, looked towards such a festival, where all was industriously collected that could gratify the

senses. Great and early bustle was made with the preparations for the important day, that they might amuse their minds agreeably in the tedious interval, and unite the story of past adventures, which never failed on such occasions, with the hope of those that were to be. The invitations to this feast were particularly numerous, for King Arthur, who wished to exhibit his splendour upon this occasion, sent messengers to kings, dukes, barons, and all who held only an acre of land of him, commanding their attendance with their servants, children, wives, and mistresses, to adorn his festival, and partake of his joy. Accordingly, on Whitsun-eve there was collected in the capital as fair an assembly as can be imagined, but the ladies of the queen's court had the advantage of all the provincial ladies in beauty and manners, or at least fancied they had, notwithstanding that the eyes of many a knight were fixed more eagerly upon the charms of a simple rustic, who now for the first time cast a timid glance at the great world, than upon the haughty fair ones

of Queen Guenevra's suite, so long exposed to view.

Genelas saw the splendid preparations for the feast, saw the influx of strangers from afar, without the hope, without the wish of partaking in it; how, indeed, could she hope for such a thing in her present state of degradation, or how could she think of wishing it, when she had taken it into her head that Carados was going to celebrate his marriage with some happy stranger, and that all King Arthur's preparations were only made to show him the greater honour?

She kept herself retired, partly because she shunned the sight of a fortunate rival, partly because she thought she could not show herself before any of the splendid assembly with such eyes, on which a deep melancholy rested, or in such poor garments; yet these garments, the fruit of her own industry, were fine and white as snow, and the glance of those mild eyes was rendered still more alluring by the sadness of love; nor need she have blushed at being led

to the altar just as she was—advantages, which became so much the more striking from the possessor's not being conscious of them.

During all this time Genelas had kept eyes and ears closed against the joy which glittered and resounded about her on every side. But early on Whitsun morning, when the solemn church procession began, she could no longer forbear looking out of the window of her little prison to see the knights and ladies pass by in their splendour. They went in pairs; each knight led the lady of his heart, and Sir Carados,—a maiden, slim as a youthful Hebe, and blooming as the goddess of the spring. At this sight she dashed the window to, and flung herself upon the bed to weep.—“Ah!” she cried, “it is just as I expected. It is, indeed, true that the fascinating creature, who hung on his arm, seems almost too young to follow him to the altar, but in a few years she will be so no longer. He has chosen her to-day, intending to make her his own at some future time, and that is as good as if it had already happened,

for Carados is true and constant, and would not break his oath to a maiden whom he loves."

Tears streamed from her eyes as she thus thought of the virtues of her late beloved, that were now to advantage another, and at the good fortune of her rival; a fever-frost thrilled through her, and she really felt so ill, that she was obliged to lie down.

In the meantime Queen Guenevra had her cares in the midst of her splendour, as well as the little Genelas in her dusky chamber.—“ You know,” she said to her women, “ how many evil tricks Morgana has played us for a time past, how many a feast she has marred by her malice. Sometimes the pleasure has been interrupted by the sickness or whims of my old husband; sometimes the country ladies have worn finer clothes than ourselves, or been more admired than ourselves; sometimes the meat was spoiled, that I myself wished to serve up; and sometimes the maintainers of our beauty were laid upon the sand in the tourney,—all tricks of the malicious enchantress, and I should

really feel surprised, if she suffers us to enjoy the present pleasure without interruption. Heaven knows what misfortune is now hanging over us!—To avoid any thing of the kind, we should have done well in inviting her to our festival, and then perhaps she might have treated us more kindly, but, alas! it is now too late.”

“Why too late?” asked Eleanor; “if your majesty thinks proper, I can, with a few grains of incense, scattered on live coals, call the princess hither, even if she were in the centre of the earth. You must know that in inviting magicians to a feast, the same ceremony is not requisite with them as with other people. Their senses are infinitely more refined than ours; an alluring odour, a few mysterious words, spoken under the fitting circumstances, brings Morgana into our circle more certainly and rapidly than the most splendid embassy.

All the ladies wondered at this knowledge of magic ceremonies in the wife of Peter the holy, and one too, who herself aspired at being canonized; with eyes wide open they saw her at the queen’s command throw a handful of in-

cense on the brazier, and draw up her mouth to words, that were as unintelligible as they were efficacious, for scarcely had she made an end than Morgana entered in her usual free and laughing manner. Guenevra coloured slightly at seeing her look so handsome, but quickly recovered, and greeted her as a sister. Morgana answered the hypocritical salutation as warmly as it was given, and remarked somewhat sarcastically that the invitation was of the latest.

"Why, sister," said Guenevra, smiling, "do you think we would treat you as any common mortal, who must be brought to court with carriage and horses? We know your rank, and act accordingly; nor have you come too late, for no part of our festival is over except the procession to church, and of that, as I remember from former times, you are not particularly fond."

"It is well," replied Morgana, and placed herself at the right side of the queen to follow her to the banquet, which was already set out.

The clouds, which had gathered upon her brow at the last malicious remark, were dissi-

pated in a moment, when, upon entering the hall, she perceived the immense crowd of handsome young knights collected there, and who now came forward respectfully to meet the cavalcade of ladies. She had always entertained a peculiar goodwill towards the male sex, and it was the hope of meeting the handsomest and bravest at this festival that had more particularly inclined her to appear so suddenly at this off-hand invitation. The sight of her too made an advantageous impression upon the knights; she was really beautiful, and the report, which spoke her not one of the most virtuous, only made her so much the more interesting to the greater part of the men.

The admiration, which the fair enchantress read in every eye, put her into an exceeding good humour; in the joy of her heart she gave the queen a thousand caresses, and as Guenevra and the other ladies, notwithstanding the great circle about Morgana, had yet their admirers, the two first days went off happily, and the third, as being the most splendid, was looked forward to with desire.

King Arthur had appointed this day for the celebration of the peacock-festival, of which, my dear readers,—knowing your experience in the manners of other times,—I need not say any thing, except that the first course at dinner was opened with a dish, in which was a peacock, floating in aromatic sauce. This dish was prepared and served up by the lady of the house, even if she were a queen, as in the present case. The royal bird, which was now to decorate the table, stood forth in all the splendours of his tail, a golden crown circled his head, and from his beak blue flames incessantly fell into a silver dish, a decoration invented by the complaisant enchantress, Morgana, to give a still more splendid appearance to the dish, which was to be served up by the queen, for at this time both parties conducted themselves as sisters.

The king, the princes, and the knights, were already assembled in the lofty dinner-hall, and every moment expected to see the queen enter with the dish in her hands, followed by her ladies, and preceded by the minstrels and

harpers; but a delay took place, from a little quarrel for precedence amongst the actresses in the ceremony. In the meantime King Arthur had retired to a window with his favourite, Sir Gawain,—when, lo! a handsome page came trotting up the street, on a snow-white palfrey, dressed in sky-blue satin, and carrying before him on his horse a purple-coloured portmanteau. At the great castle gate he dismounted nimbly from his horse, tied him to the railings, took his portmanteau under his arm, and ascended the stairs into the royal banqueting-hall. Upon entering he uncovered his head, bent his knee before the king, and said, “I am sent to you, sire, by a lady of the highest rank in another land, who through me begs a favour at your hands.”

“It is granted to her,” replied Arthur, bending his head with a gracious smile. The page thanked him, arose, and placed his portmanteau on a side table, that he might undo it and take out its contents.

O ye men! boast not that nature has given more curiosity to the weaker sex than to your-

selves! Never did a company of ladies press forward with more eagerness to see a novelty produced from the portmanteau of a stranger, than did these heroes of the British king.

“Gently! gently!” cried the page; “allow me air to breathe, and room to show my curiosities.”

At this expostulation all drew back a little, and from every mouth came an exclamation of wonder, for a sight met their eyes, beautiful beyond what any lover of finery could imagine. This was a mantle large and broad like the coronation robe of an emperor, adorned with all the colours of the rainbow, transparent as a jewel, and of a web so fine and delicate, that it was only with the help of the green spectacles of some old gentlemen that the sharp eyes of the younger ones could discover the threads.

“This garment,” continued the page, as he kept back the intruders from incautiously touching the wonderful web,—“this garment has been spun by maiden hands, of materials more precious than silk, and so prepared by the highest efforts of magic art, that it can only fit

one in this court, and for that one it is intended. The favour, sire, which my noble mistress begs of you, is, that she may be permitted to present this garment to her amongst your ladies who has never committed any infidelity to her husband or her lover, and who, besides, surpasses all her coteremporaries in virtue and inward excellence."

"And who is the happy one," cried all with one mouth, "who is to receive this wonderful garment of honour?"

"That will show itself," replied the stranger; "for, by virtue of the royal promise, every lady must try on the mantle, that we may see what virtue and fidelity dwell in the hearts of British women."

"That will be a glorious exhibition!" cried Sir Gawain, rubbing his hands, and laughing; "permit me, sire, to fetch the ladies, for I can scarcely wait for the things we are like to see."

Without waiting for any answer, Gawain ran to the ladies, who had just commenced the procession of the peacock, with the court minstrels playing and singing lustily before them. With difficulty he suppressed his laughter as

he said, "Ladies, I entreat you to quicken your steps; presents have come from a foreign land, which the king destines for her who shall be recognised for the fairest amongst you."

At these treacherous words the cheeks of the queen began to glow more warmly, her heart beat towards the victory, which she thought undoubted, and her hands trembled so much, that she was scarcely able to hold the peacock-dish. The others too felt their share of unquiet sensations; only Morgana was somewhat pale, and stepped a few paces aside, as if she meant to leave the procession, but she suddenly bethought herself, and followed the rest, who, without time or order, quite contrary to the custom of the peacock-festival, hastened into the hall, and found the king and his nobles employed in admiring the wonderful mantle. During this the king, from certain misgivings, had endeavoured to persuade the page from the public trial of the mantle, or at least to exclude the queen from so dangerous a probation, but all was in vain; the page insisted upon the royal word, and proved beyond contradiction that

this too was contained in the allowance of his request.

“ My friends,” said the king, as the ladies rushed in, “ here is a valuable mantle, which I design as a gift for her who is fully entitled to it.”

“ Oh, I see already,” said Queen Guenevra, giving her dish into the hands of a chamberlain,—“ I see that it will fit me as if made for me, and I will try it on first. But, tell me—I understand this is a trial of beauty ; is it true that she, whom this gown fits, is the fairest ?”

“ Oh, yes!—the fairest!—undoubtedly the fairest in the world!” cried the king and his knights with one voice.

Guenevra, who did not perceive the double meaning in this speech, hastened to put on the mantle and gain the prize, which, as she imagined, belonged to her before all others ; but what were the feelings of the bystanders, when, instead of flowing about her in proper ample folds, and fitting closely about the waist only, the mantle suddenly shrunk up to so small a size that it could scarcely pass for a three-

cornered neck-handkerchief, stretching itself out on one side to a narrow point, while on the other it lost itself amidst the head-dress! The worst part of all this was, that from the wriggling of the mantle the rest of the dress fell into disorder, and discovered more of her person than was agreeable to the decorum of the age.

“Well!” said Guenevra, who alone seemed to be blind to this spectacle,—“well; what is your opinion? shall I win the prize?”

For Heaven’s sake, madam, throw it off,” exclaimed the king, blushing up to his ears, and hiding her figure with his own robe,—“for Heaven’s sake, throw off the abominable thing that was not made for you; take yourself off as quickly as possible, and do not show yourself again for some time to come; for there is more in this matter than you imagine.”

“Take myself off!” cried the queen, half ashamed, half angry, for she was now partly sensible of her situation;—“take myself off!—Certainly not, till I see whether these ladies are more fortunate than I have been.”

Upon this Sir Iwain, the king's son, took the mantle from her with stifled laughter, and presented it to the fair Iselda, the bride of the brave Hector, saying, "Fair lady, who keep your lovers pining in your chains for twenty years, perhaps this costly garment was intended for you."—The fair one instantly put it on, proud of seeing it flow down so decorously to her ancles; but behind her arose a loud laugh, and as the spectators did not feel it requisite to use so much forbearance with her as they had done with the queen, she soon found in what a singular way she appeared to them.

With looks of profound contempt the faithful Hector took the treacherous garment from his rigid mistress, and brought it to the proud Rosalia and the pious Isabella, whom he almost compelled by force to put it on. "It is but fair," he said, "that your husbands, who are so ready to laugh at others, should see their own darlings put to the proof."

Great was the triumph of honest Hector, when he saw that these ladies were in almost as bad a plight as his own cruel Iselda, who had seated

herself on a distant couch, and did not dare to lift up her eyes.

“Ah, woe! ah, woe!” cried the Seneschal, upon seeing that the Lady Agnes and the wild Britomarte met with precisely the same fate as their companions had done.—“Fidelity of British ladies, what has become of you?”

“Fidelity!” exclaimed the queen,—“What do you mean by that? Is this a trial of beauty or of virtue?”

“Of virtue, gracious lady,” replied the Seneschal, laughing immoderately;—“of virtue; and one might almost wish you joy for being at least the best amongst your ladies, for, compared to what we have now seen, that which happened to you was nothing.”

“Insolent jester!” exclaimed the queen; “you deserve to be severely punished. But it is not enough that you laugh at the fate of these poor ladies; we will see how it is with the fidelity of your own wife.”

At the queen’s command the fat Lady Seneschal was compelled, notwithstanding all her struggles, to try on the treacherous mantle, and;

luckily for her, she had the pious Countess of Brittany, Lady Ellinor, for a companion; her shame else had been intolerable; for the garment fitted her so ill, and presented such strange sights to the spectators, that they turned away their eyes.

“Take comfort, ladies,” said the Seneschal; “you are not the only ones liable to this misfortune, nor am I the only one amongst the deceived husbands. However, that there may be some order amongst the tried and untried ladies, you, who have already tried the virtue of the mantle, will be pleased to seat yourselves by the side of the melancholy Iselda, who is lamenting her mishap in the corner yonder.”

The countess and the Lady Seneschal followed, with drooping heads, to the couch, on which Rosalia, Isabella, Agnes, and Britomarte had already arranged themselves of their own accord, all with downcast eyes, and none venturing to address a single syllable to their neighbours.

Now that the real nature of the trial of the mantle was thoroughly known amongst the

ladies, there was not one who did not wish herself a hundred miles away from King Arthur's court. All were in a sad tremor, and sought a thousand pretexts for not putting on the abominable garment; even the compassionate king, when he saw their distress, turned to the bearer of the unlucky present, and said,—“ My friend, it seems to me that you had better remove yourself with your mantle, for it is made extremely ill, and will certainly not fit any of these ladies, married or unmarried.”

“ Great king,” cried the page, “ where is your word?—No; you have pledged yourself once for all, and I stir not from the spot, till, amongst the ladies of your court, I have found her, for whom the meed of fidelity and virtue is destined.”

The ladies were now forced to submit to this ticklish trial, and the Seneschal came again and again to those who were sitting on the couch in the corner, exclaiming, “ Room, room, beauties; I bring you fresh companions.”

Sir Perceval, the giant-queller, had a mistress, whom he deemed too worthy to be ex-

posed to the gapers of King Arthur's court, and who was not present on this occasion; but when the hero found that such a recompense and such glory were to be gained, he held it against his conscience to exclude his beloved from the possibility of obtaining them, and hastily ran home to fetch her,—“Here, my beloved,” he exclaimed, as he led her into the royal hall amidst the crowd of terrified women and of knights, who were some smiling and some melancholy,—“here is a jewel to be gained, that has come from fairy hands, and for you only; take it, and give me, in addition to the name which I bear of being the bravest knight, that of the happy lover of the fairest and truest maiden that ever lived.”

“By no means, my dearest,” said the trembling fair one, who, from some words of the bystanders, had just then gathered what was the point in question,—“do not let us be in such a hurry. I should be accused of intrusion, being as I am the lowest amongst these ladies. Let us at least wait till I am called for.”

“That is not necessary,” cried the Se-

neschal, casting the mantle over her in spite of her struggles. "I know the time when you set yourself up above ladies of far higher quality than yourself, and now we will see which has most cause to laugh at the other."

In fact she was one of the numberless mockers and scorers of the Lady Seneschal, as the Seneschal himself had suspected. But he now was amply avenged, for the fair one found herself put into such a condition by the mantle, that with a loud cry she attempted to escape, but the Seneschal caught her, led her away by the deceived Perceval, who looked at her over his shoulder, and bringing her to the general assembly, in the corner, said,—“There, my dear, seat yourself by my wife, for I think the one is as good as the other.”

More seats were brought, and all were quickly occupied. The bearer of the mantle looked around for fresh subjects, but perceived that there were none remaining who had any pretensions to the trial.

“Sire,” cried the page aloud, “where is your royal word? there is still wanting one of the

ladies of your court, who must try on the garment of virtue. Let her be brought hither, that the matter may take its fair course."

"I know of no one," cried the queen, indignant at the disgrace of her ladies,—“I know of no one, except the virtuous Morgana, who, I suppose, has played us this trick."

"Oh," replied the page, "the mere sight of my mantle has already shown its effect upon her; she disappeared the moment she saw it, and we should seek for her in vain."

"Perhaps the missing lady is my sister, Edda," said Sir Carados, who had been a silent spectator of all that passed. "I will hasten to fetch her, for she has recently quitted the cloister, and I cannot think she will cause me any shame in the trial."

Edda was the very girl, whom Genelas, with so much unnecessary jealousy, had seen going to church in the morning with Sir Carados, and it was now probable she would carry off the prize of innocence, but all the ladies protested,—and the mantle-bearer agreed with them,—that a maiden of ten years ought not to be ad-

mitted to the trial with mature women. Carados thought upon Genelas with a sigh, secretly thanking fate that she was not present to increase the number of the disgraced, for he still loved her, and would not willingly have seen her exposed to shame. But the queen, who at this moment happened to recollect the deserted Welsh maiden, and who from old pique grudged her the good luck of being exempted from the common humiliation, called out her name aloud, and ordered her to be summoned to the meeting immediately.

Genelas was found lying upon her bed, still indisposed, but she was used to obey, and followed the queen's messenger without questions and without opposition. A few paces from the royal apartment Sir Carados was waiting for her; from the queen's words he had learnt her presence, and hastened to meet her with trembling, that he might warn her of the impending misfortune.

"Lady," he said, "I come to lead you back to your chamber, or wherever else you may think proper; my heart still speaks for you,

notwithstanding the history with Morgana, and I should unwillingly see you taking a part in the things which are now going on in the royal saloon."

The terrified Genelas drew her hand away from his, and asked what he meant. He explained as well as he was able, but still she did not comprehend him, and left him with an angry look, occasioned by jealousy of his companion in the day of the church-procession. Carados followed sadly, while she entered the saloon with all the ease of conscious innocence, and with a modest courtesy asked what they wanted of her?

"Nothing, child," said the queen with a malicious laugh, "but that you should try on this mantle. It shall be yours if it fit you."

Genelas stared mightily at this liberality of the queen's, for the mantle waved towards her in the bearer's hands in all its splendour, and with each moment discovered a fresh brilliance in the wonderful web. What maiden is there, whose heart would not beat higher at the sight of a new garment? Genelas blushed with de-

light at this regal present, and exclaimed,—
“For me?—This costly garment for me? Oh,
how have I deserved such kindness?—I, who
imagined myself obliterated from the memory
of my queen?”

Genelas fell upon her knees, and in the most
captivating manner kissed the hands of the ma-
licious Guenevra, who only bade her rise and
set to work immediately. The delighted maiden
tripped joyfully to the page, to take from his
hands the miraculous gift, still ignorant of its
real nature, but Sir Carados was close behind
her, and whispered in her ear, “Suffer any
thing rather than put on this mantle.” Genelas
could not at all comprehend this strange im-
portunity of the knight; moreover, since the
first day of the festival she had entertained a
peculiar aversion to him, which made her in-
clined to put the worst construction upon all he
said or did. She looked upon him as the dis-
turber of her happiness, made as if she heard
nothing of his admonitions, and boldly flung the
magic garment over her shoulders. Carados
turned away his face, the knights drew nearer,

the ladies on the couch began a malicious whispering, and the queen collected all the evil of her heart in a single look to beat to the earth the culprit in the state in which she soon hoped to see her. But what were the queen's feelings, what were the feelings of all who envied the young maiden, when the mantle quietly arranged itself about the slim figure of Genelas, without leaving a single ruck, and when from the mouths of the collected knighthood resounded a loud exclamation of "She is the maiden!—She is the maiden of rare virtue and fidelity, for whom the wonderful garment was made!"

Genelas stood there in all her splendour, without being able to comprehend why so slight a matter as the putting on of a mantle should be accompanied by such loud acclamations. Her inquiring looks wandered around from one to the other, but the clamour still continued, and it was not for some time that Sir Carados, —who could scarcely speak from transport at the unexpected issue of this ticklish affair,—found an opportunity of explaining in few

words, that by this very putting on of the mantle, which to her seemed so trifling, she had achieved a deed which concerned the happiness of her life.

Ashamed, confused, confounded, at the praise which poured in upon her from all sides, Genelas stood in the midst of a circle, that grew thicker and thicker around her. Her cheeks glowed, her eyes were sunk to earth, her right hand lay in the hand of the delighted Carados, who murmured a thousand words of joy, which she only half heard, and in her confusion still less understood, while her left played with the folds of the waving mantle.

“Pray, make an end of the farce,” cried Guënevra, who could scarce contain herself for envy. “Why do you intoxicate the poor fool with your admiration, before you know whether she more than half deserves it? Let us examine her first on all sides, before you trumpet forth her praises.”

With these words she turned the trembling maiden round before the assembly twice or thrice, to spy out any defects, but, lo! the

mantle waved about the latter in such graceful folds on all sides, that the male spectators unanimously exclaimed, "She is without reproach!"—Genelas, however, did not think so; she suddenly recollected an adventure, which, she imagined, rendered her unworthy of the general approbation, and when with these repentant thoughts she cast down her eyes upon her bosom, and found it more exposed than the decorous manners of that period allowed, she was covered with deeper blushes, and her eyes swam in tears.

"Treacherous mantle!" she cried, and with her hands covered her bosom, which was as beautiful as the heart that beat within it;—"treacherous mantle! fold yourself more closely about me; I will willingly confess the fault I once committed."

"There, you see!" cried Guenevra; "she is like the rest of us. Confess, you graceless creature, confess your sin this moment, and put off the garment, which does not belong to you."

“Gently,” cried the page; “gently, fair lady: one must be blind not to see the difference between you and this innocent soul; we have not yet forgotten certain things. The mantle is incontestably her right, and if she choose to render herself yet more worthy of it by the confession of a peccadillo, it is for no one to prevent her.”

“Ah!” said Genelas,—“I will confess,—willingly confess, so that this shame may be taken from me. I had once a lover;—I loved him more perhaps than I ought to do, and thus it happened, when he kissed me in the dusk, that I—that I was so bold as—as to return his kiss.”

“And the fortunate man,” asked Carados,—“the fortunate man, who led you into this mighty fault, was——”

A glance, cast at the speaker from the soft dove’s eyes of the fair one, replied to this question.

“Oh, heavenly girl!” cried Sir Carados; “it was I then!—I!—Mine was thy heart, mine

the first kiss of thy love, mine the fidelity, which distinguishes thee from thousands of thy race!"

No sooner had Genelas made her confession than the mantle fitted decorously about her snowy bosom, and left her at liberty to give up to her lover the right hand, which he was endeavouring to possess himself of, although she did not yet well know what to think of him, for the church-procession was still fresh in her recollection. But the queen, to whom this scene was for many reasons intolerable, gave orders to the attendants that they should sound to dinner, complaining that the peacock pastry was getting cold over the farce. All accordingly placed themselves at table, the knights unanimously protesting that Genelas should yield precedence to no one but the queen, and should sit between the king and Sir Carados. It was, however, by no means Guenevra's intention that Genelas should be introduced to the royal table; she objected to the Welsh maiden that she held no place at court entitling her to such an honour; but to these objections

no answer was made, and the matter remained as it had been settled.

During the whole dinner-time the knights did not cease to lift up the praises of fidelity, while the ladies ate their meal in silence, not one of them venturing to raise up her eyes, and indeed it was as if they had not been present, for no one spoke to them; all attended to Genelas only, who sate by the side of her lover, splendid as a queen and modest as a nun. The only person that sought to give a turn to the conversation was the page, who had been invited to sit at the dinner-table, and he brought forward all manner of jests; they were, however, of such a nature always, that it was easy to see he was laughing at King Arthur's court. Thus towards the end of the meal he drew a boar's head from the middle of the table to his own place, and swore a lofty oath that no knight who had an unfaithful wife or mistress would be able to cut a morsel from it. Herewith he got up to present it in his own person to the knights and nobles, but all recollected the spectacle with the mantle, and very gravely

begged to be excused. Some, who were too hard pressed by the knavish page, flung their knives under the table, or protested that they had no knives, while others had, as they said, made a vow never to carve for themselves at dinner. But Sir Carados gracefully cut up the head, presenting a piece to each of the company, and the first and daintiest piece to Genelas.

The knights, however, fell more readily into the snare, when the page requested a golden horn, and, having filled it with wine, presented it to the king, with the assurance that only he could empty the cup without spilling a drop, who had never been faithless to his beloved. It had been hitherto believed that the fidelity of men was not of so delicate a nature as the fidelity of women, and the knights and princes therefore drank boldly, in the hope that a few trifling gallantries would not be reckoned against them. But, O heavens! what a sight was there! King Arthur, indeed, spilled the least, but amongst the rest were many, who could not bring a drop

of the precious wine to their mouths, but missed the way thither in the most ridiculous manner imaginable.

The ladies now began to lift up their heads a little, and to gaze at the knights more boldly. Some even ventured a slight titter and a few words of mockery, when the page commanded silence, for the turn had now come to Sir Carados, who confidently took up the brimming goblet, and drained it to the health of the truest and fairest maiden in the world, without spilling a drop.

“Lady! lady!” said the page to Genelas, “happy is the man who calls you wife; but happy also is the wife of such a man.”

Genelas was silent, not altogether believing in the veracity of the horn, for she still dwelt upon the fair companion in the church-procession. But the little Edda, who was present, had only once to call Sir Carados brother, and every doubt was removed.

All now got up from table, and still Genelas could not keep her eyes for a moment from the

page, who again solemnly declared her to be the rightful owner of the magic mantle. She endeavoured to get a tête-à-tête with him, and succeeded before the party broke up.

"Tell me, I pray, who you are," she said: "I am quite puzzled by your appearance. The whole assembly calls you a young page, yet to me you seem the very reverse. I discover in you the form and features of a venerable old man, who once provided me with work, and inspired me with hope in the day of my poverty."

"Do not ask too much," replied the stranger with a smile. "Know me, or know me not, that is all one, but never forget that the threads, of which your garment of honour was woven, were spun by your own hand in the time of your adversity."

Genelas had perhaps gone on with her questions, but the mantle-bearer was sent for to the king, who drew him aside, and said, "Tell me, I pray you, who is the noble lady that sent you to us with your wonderful present?"

Before the page could answer, the queen drew him to the other side to ask the same question.—And now the questioners, male and female, encreased so much about him, that he found no better way of helping himself than by vanishing altogether.

“ It is Morgana who has played us this trick,” said the queen, as she was lighted to bed.

“ It is Morgana!” exclaimed all.

But Genelas was much happier in her guess that the page was no other than the Lady of the Veils, the friend and protectress of female virtue, for whose favour she was indebted to the honest Rose.

The next day Sir Carados solicited the hand of the fair Genelas of Wales, and obtained it without any opposition. She brought him nothing but her well-earned mantle and a heart full of truth and virtue, a dowry with which in those frugal times people were wont to be contented. Soon after he hastened away with her from Arthur’s seductive court to his lands in Scot-

land, whither they were accompanied by Genelas' old friend, Rose, who willingly left her cottage and the neighbourhood of Magdalene to lead a life of heaven by the side of the child of her heart's adoption.

THE END.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY THOMAS DAVISON, WHITEFRIARS.





**University of Toronto
Library**

**DO NOT
REMOVE
THE
CARD
FROM
THIS
POCKET**



